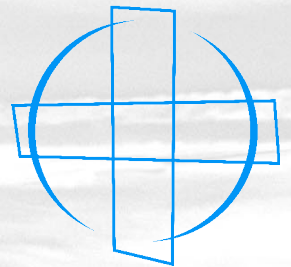


JUNE  
2025

Donald J. Wills  
*Senior Pastor*

NEW



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to ***introduce*** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, ***instruct*** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, ***inspire*** them to serve for God's kingdom, and ***incorporate*** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.



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*June 1, 2025*



# *A New Perspective*

## *1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1*

Focal Verse:

*"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."*

1 Corinthians 11:1

## Introduce

While on vacation to South Florida, I sailed on the half-day Heritage of Biscayne Cruise so I could more thoroughly explore the history of the vast and unique national park near Miami which is nearly 95% under water. The cruise took us through Florida's northern-most Keys, including Boca Chita, where we saw its picturesque lighthouse standing sentinel over the bay. As we pulled away from the dock at the marina on our thirty-passenger catamaran, Captain Hermes slowly eased the vessel into the main channel of the bustling waterway filled with a steady stream of boats pouring forth from the public harbor in Homestead. Because of the relatively shallow depth of much of Biscayne Bay, all the boats were required to follow the same channel to navigate safely from the harbor, between the Keys, and eventually to the deeper waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

As we turned the first corner out of the marina near the visitor center, I could see a line of colorful signs demarcating the right edge of the channel. They gave explicit instructions to every captain concerning the safe operation of his vessel. While we slowly navigated our way through the channel, I was also struck by the



fact that these signs beckoned boaters to pay attention to their surroundings—bidding the captains to exercise prudence not only in operating their own vehicles safely but also in being considerate of others using the bay! For example, to ensure the safety of those fishing along the seawall as well as the other boaters utilizing this same channel, the signs instructed the captains to maintain “idle speed” in the strictly enforced “no wake” zone. As we proceeded further from the harbor and passed the breakwater, however, the signs slowly signaled an increase in speed based on the depth and width of the channel. Soon, all these regulatory signs and restrictions would disappear altogether.

In the deeper water of the Atlantic Ocean, all the restrictions so prominently featured in the channel were lifted. Still, every boater had the obligation to watch out for other craft and be considerate of those sailing in the bay! Yet, some displayed no

## Introduce

such consideration for those trying to fish or sail on smaller crafts. On an otherwise calm day, the wake left behind from speedboats racing violently tossed smaller vessels to and fro at times. Rather than think about the effect of their wake on smaller vessels or perhaps even inexperienced captains—which could cause other boats to capsize or people to be jettisoned overboard—the pilots of these speedboats merely relished their freedom to speed anywhere they desired. Since they were no longer under restriction, they could open their engines and run their boats as fast as they wished. But was exercising such freedom from the limitations of the channel always the best thing to do even though they had the right as long as they safely operated their own boat?

Today, we live in a world that thinks very much like the captains of these speedboats. Rather than consider how their actions may affect or influence others, many people demand their rights. Many people seek to exercise their personal freedoms—sometimes even callously at the expense of others, causing great harm. Sometimes when exercising their own freedom they can leave a trail of damage in their wake, preventing God from using them to spread the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1, however, Paul implores us to reject this type of thinking.

When it comes to the gospel, we are to carefully consider how our actions may affect others. We should never do anything that hinders us from presenting the gospel effectively or being a consistent witness for Christ. We should never demand our rights or freedoms, but rather voluntarily lay them aside for the sake of communicating the gospel and seeing people come to a relationship with Christ. We need to adopt this new perspective by imitating the righteousness of Christ and living consistently with His Word. When we do, this will revolutionize our ability to communicate the gospel effectively and God can grow His kingdom through us as His people!

Key  
Question

How often do you stop to think about how your actions may affect others?



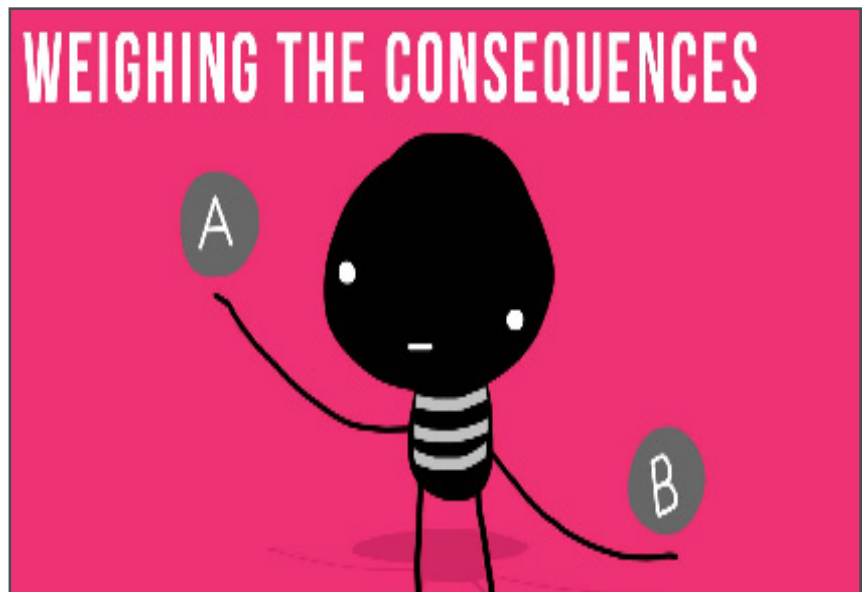
### 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

#### **CONSIDER THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS:**

After citing negative examples from Israel's past—marked by disbelief, disobedience, and idolatry—as a warning to the Corinthian church who was in danger of repeating these same mistakes, Paul returns to the main point he began in chapter 8: Christian freedom must never be used selfishly. Instead, we are to exercise our freedom in a way that glorifies Christ by aligning our lives with the pattern of His character. This is the key to both strengthening the church and communicating the gospel effectively. As a result, we must willingly set aside anything that might cause a fellow believer to stumble in sin ([1 Cor 8:9, 13](#)) or that might hinder our ability to share the gospel with the world (1 Cor 9:19-23). God has not called us to prioritize our own individual rights or insist on exercising our personal freedom, especially when doing so could damage the spiritual well-being of others. Rather, He calls us to weigh how our actions influence the growth and maturity of others in Christ.

To understand Paul's remarks in this section, we must remind ourselves of this part of the letter's historical setting. The Corinthians had asked Paul about the permissibility of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Many believed that they had the right to do so, especially when the meat was sold in the marketplace and consumed in private homes. They reasoned

that the idols were merely inanimate objects with no real power and eating such meat would pose no real spiritual danger. In principle, Paul agreed with this logic ([1 Cor. 8:4](#)), but he quickly highlighted a deeper concern—how this knowledge could harm fellow believers. Some within the church were “weaker” in conscience. Seeing fellow Christians eat this meat—especially if done in contexts associated with pagan rituals—could lead them back into old patterns, confusing their faith and harming their conscience. For Paul, this was not just a matter of personal freedom but a test of love: knowledge puffs up, but love builds up ([1 Cor. 8:1](#)).



Moreover, Paul addresses an even more serious issue: some Corinthians had moved beyond private consumption and were attending cultic meals in pagan temples ([1 Cor. 10:14–22](#)). Even if they did not believe the idols were real, their presence at these feasts blurred the lines between identity in Christ and pagan worship. Therefore, Paul warns that their participation in these feasts is incompatible with their loyalty to Christ: “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too” ([10:21](#)). To straddle both worlds is to compromise our exclusive service to Christ and set a bad precedent for the world who is watching us.

In essence, therefore, Paul calls the Corinthians to evaluate not only what is permissible, but also what is beneficial and edifying to others ([1 Cor 10:23–24](#)). For the sake of the gospel and the unity of the church, they must consider how their actions appear to others—especially those who are vulnerable in conscience. Divided allegiance, even in appearance, threatens both the integrity of their witness and the spiritual health of the community. As we discussed two weeks ago, we cannot serve Christ effectively with one foot still planted in the ways of the world.

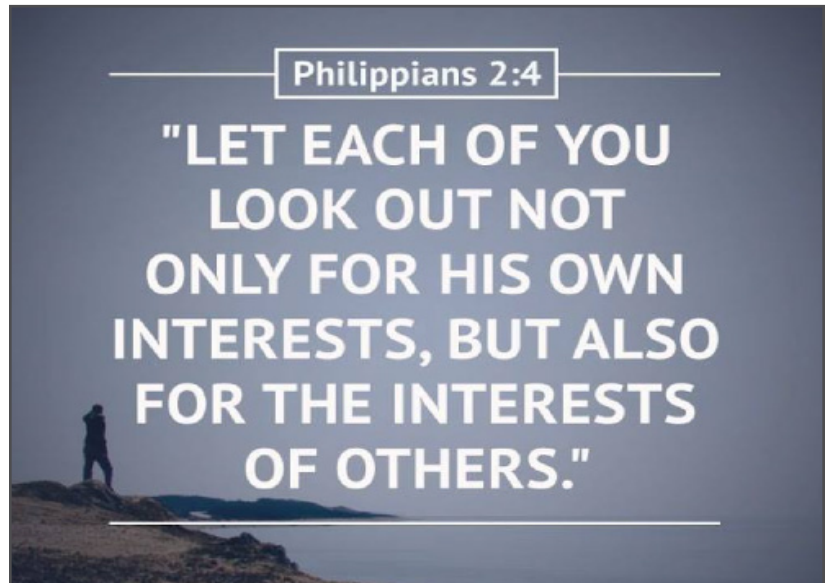
Question  
# 1

What does participation in certain activities say about where your loyalty lies? In what areas of your life might you be dangling one foot in the world while still trying to serve Christ?

To answer their question, Paul takes the Corinthian slogan “**all things are lawful**” and qualifies with two important truths: **not all things are helpful** and **not all things edify** (v. 23). While believers may have the right to eat such meat, Paul challenges them to think beyond their individual freedom. He calls them to reorient their mindset from self-centered thinking to a community-focused perspective. Just because something may be permissible does not mean it is always beneficial for the body of Christ as a whole. As followers of Christ, we are certainly accountable for our personal choices, but we must also consider how these choices affect the spiritual **well-being** of others. For believers, the growth and health of the community should far outweigh any perceived individual freedom that we may cherish. This is why Paul emphatically urges us to **let each one not seek his own good, but each one the other’s well-being** (v. 24).

Unfortunately, the Western cultural mindset often conditions us to think exclusively in individualistic terms: What can I do to get ahead of others? How can I

make a name for myself? What are my rights and freedoms of self-expression? How can I live my life on my own terms without any interference? But God calls us to something very different—to think corporately and collectively as a community of His people. Though He has uniquely gifted each of us, endowed us with distinct personalities, and called us to various roles of service, He still desires that we function as one body, not merely a group of individuals. God wants to break us out of the mold of self-centered, independent thinking.



When we adopt the pattern of Western culture, the church risks becoming an “organization” that exists to serve us, rather than a living body where we serve Him and one another. This mindset reduces life in the church to a matter of personal preference: What style of music do I like? Is the corporate meeting of the church convenient for my schedule? How do the programs serve or benefit me? How is the church meeting my needs? But God has called us to a higher level of thinking—one where the primary questions should be: How can I serve God by serving and meeting the needs of others in this community? How can I help disciple others so we can grow together in our faith? How can I partner with God to spread the gospel?

Sadly, in much of the Western world, the church has become about what God can do “for” me through the church, instead of what He can do “through” me to build His kingdom. While God is faithful to meet our needs, as He has promised, He also calls us to look beyond ourselves and our own needs—to see and respond to the needs of the body as a whole. In doing so, we then allow God to use us to strengthen and grow His church.

Question  
# 2

What are some practical ways we can prioritize others’ well-being in our decision-making as believers?



To avoid any misunderstanding about the phrase **all things are lawful**, we must be clear about what it does *not* mean. Paul is not endorsing the idea that believers are free to ignore God's righteous standards or live however they please. That would be a serious distortion of both Paul's message and the broader teaching of Scripture. First, we must recognize that **all things are lawful** is *not* Paul's personal opinion, but a slogan the Corinthians themselves had adopted. They had misunderstood their freedom in Christ and twisted it into a license to sin—an abuse that ultimately brought them under severe condemnation. Just as Paul warned in his letter to the Romans, he could have issued the same warning to the Corinthians here: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it" ([Rom 6:1-2](#))? For Paul goes on to explain that God has raised us to walk in a new life in Christ—not to follow the old pattern of our flesh which we should have put to death ([Rom 6:4](#)).

Second, Paul addresses this phrase within a specific context: the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols. His response is not a blanket endorsement of moral relativism. Nowhere in Scripture are believers given permission to engage in behaviors that God has clearly called sinful. In fact, Scripture consistently warns against such conduct, listing specific sins that are incompatible with a life in Christ ([Rom 1:24-32](#); [1 Cor 6:9-11](#); [Gal 5:16-21](#); [Rev 21:8](#)). True Christian freedom is not the right to do whatever we want—it is the freedom we have to live righteously in a way that honors God and builds up others. In Christ, God has called us to conform our lives to His. We are to live holy lives just like He challenged Israel in the Old Testament: "For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy" ([Lev 11:44](#)).

Since we no longer face the specific issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols, how does Paul's principle apply to us today? In the United States, we enjoy freedom of speech—both in person and online. While we may have the legal right to say or post whatever we choose, as believers we are called to pause and consider the effect of our words on others.

**SO I SAY, WALK BY THE  
SPIRIT, AND YOU WILL  
NOT GRATIFY THE DESIRES  
OF THE FLESH.**

**– GALATIANS 5:16**

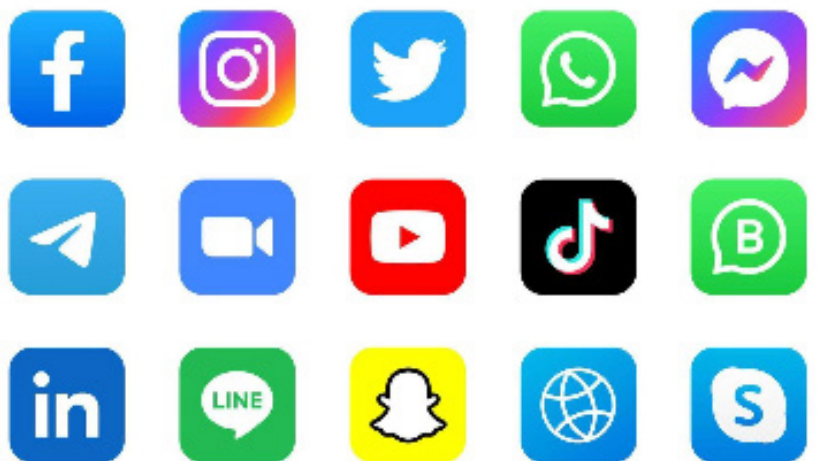
Scripture implores us to speak the truth in love ([Eph 4:15](#)), and though we should never shy away from proclaiming God's Word, there are times when restraint is the wiser choice. In emotionally charged situations, it may not be the right moment to exercise our freedom to speak—especially if it will not contribute to a fruitful or Christ-honoring conversation.

Question  
# 3

In what situation this week did you consider (or should have considered) the effect of your actions on others before exercising a personal freedom?

In some ways, online platforms pose an even greater challenge than in-person interactions. The absence of tone, body language, and relational context makes it easier for our words to be misunderstood or cause unintended harm. Even if we are theologically correct and legally free to post on any topic, it does not mean it is always **helpful** or **edifying** to do so. Therefore, we must be even more cautious in the digital world where one unwise post can damage our witness or create unnecessary controversy that distracts from the gospel. Rather than becoming entangled in divisive debates, we should keep our focus on what matters most: sharing the gospel and representing Christ well. While face-to-face conversations are ideal, the internet can still be a powerful ministry tool—especially reaching those who may never step foot in a church.

Before posting online, we should always ask: Is what I'm posting glorifying to the Lord? Are my words and pictures (Snaps, Instagram) consistent with the character of Christ? Could what I post be misunderstood or misinterpreted? Does it reflect the truth of Scripture and the love of God? If the answer to any of these questions is "no," then we have a spiritual obligation not to say or post it. This doesn't mean that we ignore false teaching or sin, but



that we seek the most effective, loving, and Christ-centered way to respond—always with the goal of leading others to Christ through the gospel.

With the growing convenience of online broadcasts, many able-bodied believers—though physically capable of attending in person—frequently choose to travel or engage in other activities they deem more important. Their Sunday attendance becomes sporadic, and they have little to no involvement in the mission or ministries of the church that are designed to advance the gospel and disciple believers. While there is certainly nothing wrong with taking vacations—God created us with the need for rest—we must seriously consider how our absence impacts the church corporately.

Our inconsistent presence can unintentionally influence younger or less mature believers, teaching them by example that gathering and serving with the church body is optional or unimportant. It also weakens the effectiveness of the church's mission. When regular participation is reduced to occasional attendance, a vacuum is created—one in which discipleship opportunities are missed, ministry roles go unfilled, and the spread of the gospel is hindered. Those who only attend occasionally often do not pursue spiritual growth or help others grow, nor do they actively share their faith or invite others into the life of the local church as God has called us to do. Their role is reduced to simply occupying a pew during worship on rare Sundays.

Do we have the freedom to travel, take weekend getaways, and engage in local activities? Absolutely—so long as those activities glorify the Lord. But we must also pause to consider the consequences of our choices: Are they helpful? Do they edify the body of Christ? Do they support or undermine the health of the local church? The church is not a social club for occasional gatherings and casual friendships. It is a spiritual family—a body on mission together to proclaim the gospel and grow in maturity. God has called every believer to play a role in this mission, not independently, but collectively through the local church. We cannot fulfill this God-given mission effectively if corporate worship, service, and discipleship are not priorities in our lives.

Question  
# 4

How can we foster a church culture where love and mutual edification take precedence over personal preferences?



## 1 Corinthians 10:25-26

### **CONSUME THE FOOD WITHOUT QUESTION:**

Paul now addresses two specific scenarios: purchasing meat from the marketplace and eating it at home (vv. 25-26) and dining in the home of an unbeliever who has invited them to a meal (vv. 27-29). In the first situation, Paul makes it clear that eating meat bought from the **market**—without investigating its origins—is of no spiritual consequence. He instructs believers to **eat whatever is sold** at the **market** without questioning it (v. 25). In a sense, what they don't know won't hurt them; ignorance in this case protects their conscience from harm since it doesn't distract their focus from the Lord. Since they do not know whether the meat has been offered to an idol, believers are free to partake of it with thanksgiving, focusing on the truth that the Lord ultimately provided it.

To direct their attention to this reality, Paul cites Psalm 24:1: **“The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness”** (v. 26). This verse, often used by rabbis to bless or give thanks for food, reinforces the idea that all creation—and therefore all provision—belongs to God (see also [1 Cor 10:30](#)). In the Christian context,



acknowledging that the food is from the Lord enables believers to maintain a clear conscience, since their action is not tied to idol worship and does not disrupt their fellowship with God. The key focus remains on God as the provider not on the unknown background of the meat. Because the act of eating is done privately and in gratitude to God, it poses no spiritual danger and does not compromise their freedom in Christ. In our culture today, we really don't have anything equivalent to this practice. Nevertheless, it always should remind us to stop and acknowledge God for His provision, giving thanks for all the ways He has blessed us.

A close modern analogy to Paul's teaching in this passage is how businesses or corporations may use the money we spend on their products to support causes

## Instruct

that are contrary to biblical values. If we were to scrutinize every company, we'd likely find that almost all of them support at least one agenda that is unbiblical—whether it be abortion, transgender ideology, LGBTQ+ activism, or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The problem is, once we start trying to boycott every company involved in questionable practices, we quickly find ourselves on a slippery slope. Where could we realistically shop? What products would be left to buy?

In this light, Paul's advice remains incredibly practical: don't ask questions for conscience's sake. As long as a company is not overtly promoting or pushing ungodly causes through their products or branding, believers are free to shop there with a clear conscience, giving thanks to God as the provider. However, if a business makes a public and aggressive stance in favor of a lifestyle or worldview that directly opposes Scripture, we must reconsider our support for them and look for alternatives that do not compromise our witness.

Question  
# 5

In today's context, what are some examples of situations where we might unknowingly engage with something that has questionable origins?

### 1 Corinthians 10:27-30

#### **CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH WISDOM:**

In the second scenario, an unbeliever **invites** a believer to meal in their home. In this case, the believer is instructed not to raise **questions** about the origin of the meat but simply to **eat what is** served without concern (v. 27). The principle Paul advocates here is one of hospitality, respect, and gospel witness. Even today, missionaries are taught to adopt this same approach: whenever invited into someone's home they are to receive whatever food is offered with gratitude—out of respect for their host and to avoid placing unnecessary barriers in the way of sharing the gospel. Today, the issue usually isn't whether the meal has religious significance, but rather how we respond in love and humility in cross-cultural settings. Often, hosts who have very little will serve their guests what they consider their finest. Refusing such generosity may not only offend them but also close the door to future gospel conversations.

While on mission in East Africa, I quickly learned the wisdom of this principle—eating whatever was placed before me without hesitation. For the most part, I enjoyed

[illegible]

To this scenario, Paul adds an important caveat: **if anyone** informs the believer that the meat **was offered to idols**, he should abstain from eating it—both for his own sake as well as the sake of the one who brought it up (v. 28). Paul doesn't specify who this **anyone** is—it could be the host or another believer present at the meal. However, his focus is not on the identity of the person, but the impact of the new information. Once the issue is raised, the context of the meal shifts: it now carries religious overtones that were not previously considered. In that moment, continuing to eat would send a mixed message—both to fellow believers and to the host—about where the Christian's



loyalty lies (v. 29a).

Otherwise, if no one raises the issue, Paul affirms the believers freedom to eat with thanksgiving, recognizing that the food ultimately comes from God (vv. 29b-30). So why should a believer voluntarily lay aside this freedom just because someone else has a concern? Because the act of eating has now become a matter of personal witness. Once the meat's connection to idolatry is made explicit, eating it may be misunderstood as participation in pagan worship. For weaker believers, this could lead to spiritual confusion and cause them to revert to their former pagan life. Just as bad, the unbelieving host may see the believer as hypocritical—claiming to worship the one true God—yet partaking in a meal knowingly associated with another deity. In such cases, abstaining from the meat is the wisest and most loving course of action. Even though we may have the right to eat, our responsibility to protect the witness of the gospel and the conscience of others takes priority.

In all things, we must weigh the cost of our actions on both the spread of the gospel and the spiritual growth of the church. For the sake of Christ, we are called to voluntarily lay down our freedoms—whether in what we say, what we do, what we eat, what we wear, or where we go—if those freedoms become obstacles to



advancing the kingdom. Our personal rights must never take precedence over God's mission. As Paul will make clear in his conclusion of this section, whatever we do must ultimately bring glory to the Lord (v. 31). Therefore, rather than insisting on our temporal rights or desires, God has called us to kingdom-minded living which means choosing what benefits the church collectively, caring for others' spiritual well-being, and above all doing what honors Christ rather than merely satisfies ourselves.

## 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

### **CONFORM YOUR CHARACTER TO CHRIST:**

To summarize his argument and reinforce his teaching, Paul offers two overarching principles: 1) **whatever** we **do** should be done **for the glory of God** (v. 31) and 2) whatever we do should also take into account how others may perceive our personal witness—both among believers and non-believers (v. 32). In other words, we must consider how our actions can influence fellow believers in their spiritual well-being but also how non-believers might perceive them as well giving us a chance to share the gospel. From the beginning of chapter 8, Paul has made it clear that the Christian life is not governed merely by knowledge or personal rights, but by love. Our aim is not to assert our freedoms, but to avoid anything that might impede the progress of the gospel (v. 33). For this reason, Paul sets aside his own desires and freedoms so that others may benefit spiritually—and ultimately **be saved** through his testimony and ministry. His life is shaped by the mission of God, not by personal ambition.

The only way we can live righteously and avoid hindering the spread of the gospel is by following Christ's example ([1 Cor 11:1](#)). In his last command in this section before broaching a new topic, Paul urges the Corinthians to **imitate** him—not because he is perfect, but because his life is modeled after Christ. Like Christ, Paul laid aside his personal ambition when God called him on the road to Damascus and he focused strictly on the mission that God had set before Him. Christ, in coming to earth, also laid aside His personal ambition, taking the form of a servant and humbling Himself to an excruciating death on the cross so that He could fulfill the Father's will for our sakes and offer us His righteousness by bearing all our sins ([Phil 2:6-8](#)). Although Christ could have exercised His rights and authority as God and condemned His executioners on the cross, He voluntarily laid aside that privilege for our sakes so that we could have life through His death!

Both Paul and Christ exemplify the new perspective we are called to adopt as believers. Motivated by our love for the Lord, we are to prioritize the spiritual well-being of others and do whatever it takes to proclaim the gospel to the world without diluting or compromising its truth. This requires a shift from individualistic thinking to a collective mindset, where our actions are evaluated not selfishly by their personal benefits, but by how they affect others, reflect the character of Christ, and bring glory

to the Lord. May we embrace this example set by Christ and also lived out by Paul, so that we can build up the church, foster spiritual maturity within the body, and serve as an effective witness to the world around us—ultimately leading others into a life-transforming relationship with Christ Jesus.

## *Inspire*

After He saves us, God places us in a body to grow together spiritually so we can minister effectively by proclaiming the gospel and advancing His kingdom. To accomplish these goals, it requires a new perspective. We must be conscious of the needs and spiritual well-being of those around us—particularly how our actions may influence their spiritual growth and serve to help us communicate the gospel by living consistently with the righteous character of Christ. No longer are we to prioritize exercising our personal rights and freedoms, but we are to lay them aside willingly for the collective benefit of the community and the glory of the Lord.

In our world, it can be difficult to adopt this new perspective. Like the captains of the speedboats mentioned in the introduction, society teaches us to take advantage of our freedoms and use them to our benefit—often without regard for how it may affect others around us. Just as the wake from a speeding boat can toss smaller and weaker vessels violently—altering their course and potentially even causing a catastrophic accident—so can our actions affect the consciences of weaker Christians. God has not called us to live in isolation. We cannot be oblivious to how our actions—whether negative, positive, or neutral—affect the church collectively. Therefore, let us glorify the Lord by working with the people whom He has placed in this local body to grow together spiritually, to do the work of ministry collectively, and to share the gospel faithfully.

## *Incorporate*

In what areas of your life do you need to shift from thinking individually to thinking communally as a member of Christ's body?

Who are you imitating—and who might be imitating you in their walk with Christ?

In what specific ways can your lifestyle become a bridge (or a barrier) to someone else believing the gospel?



*June 8, 2025*



# *A New Creation Restored*

## *1 Corinthians 11:2-16*

Focal Verse:

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

1 Corinthians 11:2

## Introduce

In the early 90s, *Saturday Night Live* introduced a recurring character named “Pat” played by actress Julia Sweeny. With short, curly black hair, Pat dressed gender-neutrally with a Western-style blue button-up shirt and khaki pants with dark brown loafers—all which obscured any feature that could easily identify the character as male or female. Pat’s mannerisms and body language also provided few clues as to the character’s true identity. Thus, the punchline of the sketches centered around people in Pat’s life trying to figure out whether the character was male or female. Just when people thought they had determined Pat’s gender with certainty, the character would make some ambiguous statement—leading to further doubt and more confusion. Generally, each of the skits concluded with a lighthearted jingle mocking the blurring of gender distinctions: “It’s time for androgyny—that’s just Pat.”

Long before such lunacy depicted on *Saturday Night Live*, certain movements—especially in the modern era—have attempted to downplay, blur, or even erase the distinctiveness between males and females in our culture. Although men and women have equal value and worth before God, He created us differently biologically, endowed



us with unique traits and characteristics, and assigned us distinctive roles designed to be used in tandem to make society function cohesively. To blur these God-given distinctions and roles or attempt to abolish them altogether constitutes sin! Not only does it create confusion, but it also destroys the family—leading to a breakdown of society. In the 90s, sketches like “Pat” may have seemed lighthearted, funny, or even harmless. But Scripture paints a different picture of the mockery of sin: “Fools mock at sin” ([Prov 14:9](#)). In other words, foolish people downplay the consequences of sin and make light of the need for repentance. Consequently, the way that seems right to them actually leads to death and destruction ([Prov 14:12](#)).

Fast-forward thirty-five years from the introduction of “Pat” and look at how far our society has digressed. We have supposed “academic” institutions and highly

## Introduce

“educated” people promoting the existence of more than two genders and, perhaps even worse, a fluidity between the genders. Rather than accept and value one’s God-given biological gender, it has become fashionable to choose your pronouns and “be” whatever gender suits you psychologically. We have men invading women’s sports and infiltrating their most vulnerable spaces in locker rooms and bathrooms. We have federal judges seeking confirmation who cannot define the term “woman” or politicians who want to describe mothers as “birthing people.” Some “scientists” ironically even claim that “men” can give birth! Such individuals are adamantly trying to erase any distinction between men and women in the name of equality and to placate people’s sinful choices.

Rather than getting these people the mental help—or even better the spiritual life they need in Christ through repentance—our society has affirmed their sin and attempted to normalize it. Instead of achieving justice and equality, this affirmation and coddling has contributed to a complete moral and psychological breakdown of our society. Instead of teaching people how to have a fulfilled life through a relationship with Christ, it has caused confusion, psychological harm, and even an increase in death in the form of misguided and disenfranchised people taking their own lives.

Yet, this attempt to blur distinctions between the two genders and abolish the God-given roles inherent in the created order is nothing new. As we will see, Paul faced a similar problem in Corinth ([1 Cor 11:2-16](#)). Although they held fast to some traditions ([11:2](#)), some in the Corinthian church abused their newfound freedom in Christ and tried to downplay the unique way God created men and women as well as the distinctive roles with which He had tasked them in the home and church. This led to confusion and disorder ([1 Cor 14:33](#)), hindering worship, ministry, and service within the body. In a world struggling to define identity, however, the gospel offers true freedom—not in self-expression, but in Christ who makes us new. As men and women, uniquely made in His image, we find dignity, purpose, and joy when we live according to God’s design—not the blurred distinctions that the world espouses.

Key  
Question

In what ways specifically have you seen the world attempt to blur the distinction between males and females or abolish God-given roles assigned uniquely to them?

### 1 Corinthians 11:2

#### **REMEMBER THE PURPOSE OF TRADITION:**

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is one of the most widely debated and difficult passages to understand in all Scripture—not only because of its perceived controversial subject matter, but because of the difficulty in establishing its historical context and determining the precise meaning of terms like **head**. Paul sandwiches this section between two key discussions about how believers should live together in the church, focusing on advancing the gospel and glorifying the Lord through the use of our distinctive personalities and giftedness. In these sections, Paul notes the importance of caring for the spiritual well-being of others over prioritizing our own liberty (chs. 8-10) as well as working together in unity to fulfill the mission of the church by lovingly using our distinctive God-given gifts to serve in the specific roles in which He has called us (chs. 12-14). Yet, how does this background help us understand our focal passage this week?

God desires the church to function as a cohesive community rather than a collection of individuals pursuing their own personal goals and ambitions. So, He designed the church to reflect the order and unity He established in the family at creation—before sin introduced dysfunction into the world

(see [Eph 5:22-33](#)). In both the family and the church, God has endowed men (husbands) and women (wives) with unique traits and gifts, assigning them different yet complementary roles with the goal of working together in a way that glorifies Him to produce righteous fruit and spiritual maturity.

Consequently, any dysfunction or turmoil in the nuclear family of believers also disrupts fellowship and ministry within the church. Thus, it seems that here in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul must deal with one of those disruptions where some in the church have attempted to rebel against God's design for the family. He must restore order within the community based on God's original design and reorient the

For as the body is one and has many members,  
but all the members of that one body, being  
many, are one body, so also is Christ.

**1 Corinthians 12:12**



Corinthians' thinking on serving the Lord rather than serving their own self-interests.

Ironically, Paul begins by praising the Corinthians for remembering him **in** everything and holding fast to **the traditions just as** he had **delivered them** (v. 2). Up to this point in the letter, however, Paul has not mentioned anything praiseworthy in the Corinthians' conduct at all. They have seemingly abandoned, or at the very least misconstrued, much of what Paul had taught! This has led some to speculate that Paul is speaking somewhat sarcastically here and is further chiding them for introducing competition and disorder into the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Because Paul doesn't specify what **traditions**—or instructions as the Greek word also implies—it makes it more challenging to know precisely what he has in mind. He could, in fact, be genuinely commending the Corinthians for seeking his guidance and remembering him by writing their questions (such as those about marriage, meat sacrificed to idols, and spiritual gifts). In that sense, remembering him **in all things** could refer to their ongoing correspondence and willingness to consult him for further instruction on matters central to life and ministry within the church.

If Paul genuinely intends this as praise, then which **traditions** are the Corinthians actually following? Verses 2 through 16, on one hand, suggest that the Corinthians have abandoned some cultural "**traditions**," such as head coverings or hairstyles for women. By disregarding these **traditions**, they blurred the distinction between men and women and



aligned themselves with corrupt cultural practices that carried the connotation of debauchery, defiance, and sexual immorality as we shall see. Such behavior would not merit praise from Paul, since it undermines the message of righteousness and order which God desires in the church.

On the other hand, the Corinthians were still practicing the **traditions** associated with Christ and His sacrifice—specifically the Lord's Supper—even if they were not conducting it in a proper or edifying way (see [1 Cor 11:17-34](#)). In this sense, Paul may

be acknowledging their effort to continue following the essential ordinances of the faith, even as he prepares to correct their misunderstanding and abuse. His initial praise, then, could be a rhetorical strategy to find common ground—reaffirming their commitment to Christian **traditions** while setting the stage for necessary correction.

Question  
# 1

Why is it sometimes beneficial to point out what someone is doing right before pointing out what they are doing wrong?

Even though we may still have many unanswered questions about Paul's praise for the Corinthians' adherence to **traditions**, we can glean a valuable lesson from this verse. When rightly understood and applied, tradition serves an important purpose in the life of the church. It helps us remember and celebrate what Christ has done for us, grounding us in the truth of His transformative work. Tradition, like the Lord's Supper, can give us a sense of purpose and direction, keeping us from drifting aimlessly or, even worse, forgetting our identity in Christ.

Moreover, tradition also helps us remember our own past—so we don't continually repeat the same mistakes—and challenges us to evaluate our lives to see the progress we've made in Christ. However, in our culture, many people have a strong aversion to **traditions**, dismissing them as outdated, restrictive or irrelevant. They want to discard anything traditional, seeing it as an obstacle to progress or personal freedom. Yet, Scripture teaches us that not all **traditions** are to be abandoned or disregarded—especially when they point us to the Lord. Instead, we must strive to understand why we practice them and ensure that we do them in a way that reflects right practice and honors Christ.

Question  
# 2

In what ways can traditions help keep believers grounded in the faith? What are some of the traditions that serve this purpose for us as a church?

**1 Corinthians 11:3-7****RESPECT THE ROLLS GOD HAS GIVEN:**

Despite his brief note of praise, Paul quickly pivots to the heart of his argument: addressing the necessary correction the Corinthians must make to get back on track. Before diving into a verse-by-verse study, we first need to establish a general overview of the issues at hand. This means determining the most likely historical context and then the most probable meaning of the passage. Given the complexity of the passage, we won't be able to address every scholarly proposal—only those with the strongest textual support.

Scholars have generally proposed three possibilities as to the historical problem Paul was addressing. I'll summarize each, moving from the weakest to the strongest argument, before providing a brief analysis. First, some suggest that the “strong” (or wealthy) were dressing or behaving in ways that flaunted



their social status, thereby humiliating the “weak” (or poor). While this fits the broader context of 8:1-11:1—where Paul emphasizes protecting the conscience of fellow Christians—the terms “strong” and “weak” refer to one’s spiritual maturity rather than their economic class. Moreover, while 11:17-34 does address a rift between the wealthy and poor who were excluded from the festivities at the Lord’s Supper, it’s hard to apply this same principle to head coverings or hairstyles—especially for men—as a means of flaunting wealth during corporate worship since it had little to do with one’s financial status.

Second, others have proposed that the Corinthians were imitating the pagan religious customs by covering or uncovering their heads during worship. For women, uncovering the head or letting the hair down to flow loosely—especially in Corinth’s context—would identify them with temple prostitutes. This would send the wrong message to the culture. Instead of distinguishing themselves with the righteousness and propriety of Christ, the women would have identified themselves with the sexually

immoral practices of the secular culture. Therefore, this proposal fits well with Paul's concerns in 8:1-11:1 where he warns against participating in practices that could lead believers back into idolatry or even associate them with such practices so that they harm their testimony and limit their ability to proclaim the gospel.

Third, some have proposed that the Corinthians abused their newfound freedom in Christ blurring the distinctions between men and women in an attempt to abolish their God-given roles inherent within creation itself. In some sense, they may have misunderstood and misapplied Paul's teaching—"there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ"—to mean that all social and gender roles were irrelevant ([Gal 3:28](#)). But while salvation is offered equally to all through Christ, God did not erase our distinct characteristics and roles designed to make both society and the family function in an orderly way.

While cultural conventions—such as diet ([8:1-11:1](#)), dress, or hairstyles—do not play a role in our salvation, believers are called to live in a way that reflects God's design and aligns our identity with Christ. To flaunt our freedom in Christ as a means to challenge the norms God established at creation for both

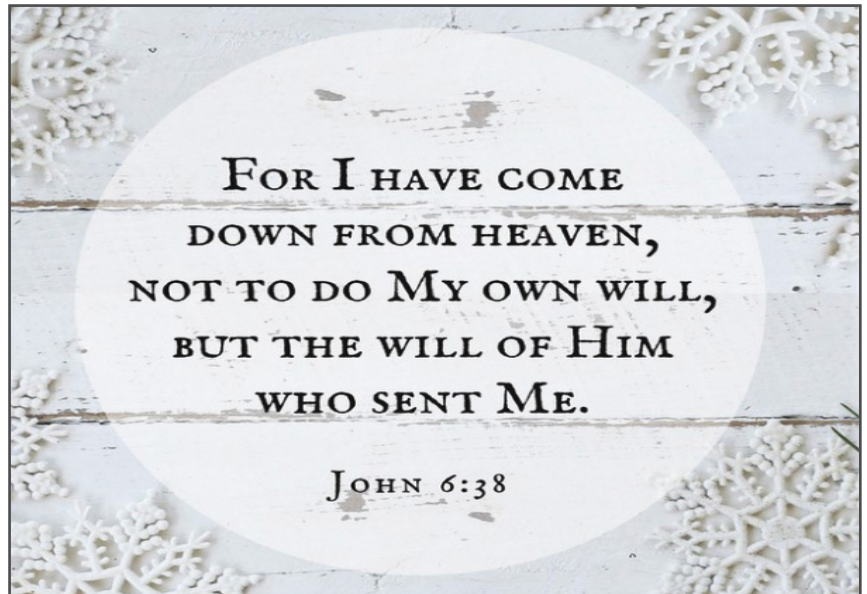
the family and society is inconsistent with our calling. To whatever practices Paul may be referring here, men and women were intentionally blurring their God-given distinctions during corporate worship—creating an atmosphere of selfish competition in a struggle for power which was leading to disorder and chaos distracting the church from its true focus. To display different characteristics or to have different roles does not imply the inferiority or superiority of one over the other; both are equally valuable to God. Nor does it justify one sinfully dominating the other in a play for power. Rather, these distinctions call us to work together in love, fulfilling our unique roles to propagate the gospel, build the church, and raise a family that honors the Lord.





Having established the historical context, we can now identify the most probable meaning of this passage. We'll focus on the two most compelling interpretations, which together provide the clearest explanation of the text as a whole. Head coverings (or hairstyles) in this passage symbolize “authority” and “submission”; concepts that God has purposefully woven into the fabric of the created order. Today, people frequently misconstrue these concepts as something demeaning or oppressive and, as a result, often rebel against them. Yet, in Scripture, submission says nothing about one's value or worth, nor does it imply inferiority. Rather, it shows us how we should order ourselves in a complementary way, enabling us to exercise our God-given roles and giftedness as one body—whether in marriage or in the church—thereby glorifying the Lord.

God the Father and Jesus provide a perfect model of this relationship for us to follow! Jesus often declared Himself to be one with the Father ([John 10:30](#)). As distinct Persons of the Trinity, however, they are still equal in every way ([Phil 2:6](#)). Yet, in carrying out the mission of redemption, Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father's will ([John](#)



[6:38-40](#); [Luke 22:42](#)). God designed both marriage and the church to function in this same way—not to create a hierarchy of worth or value, but to ensure that a diverse community comes together in unity as one body, setting aside personal ambitions and collectively pursuing His will as He has uniquely gifted each person. Therefore, any attempt to blur the distinctions God established between men and women, or to reject their unique roles, is an affront to God's design and purpose!

Question  
# 3

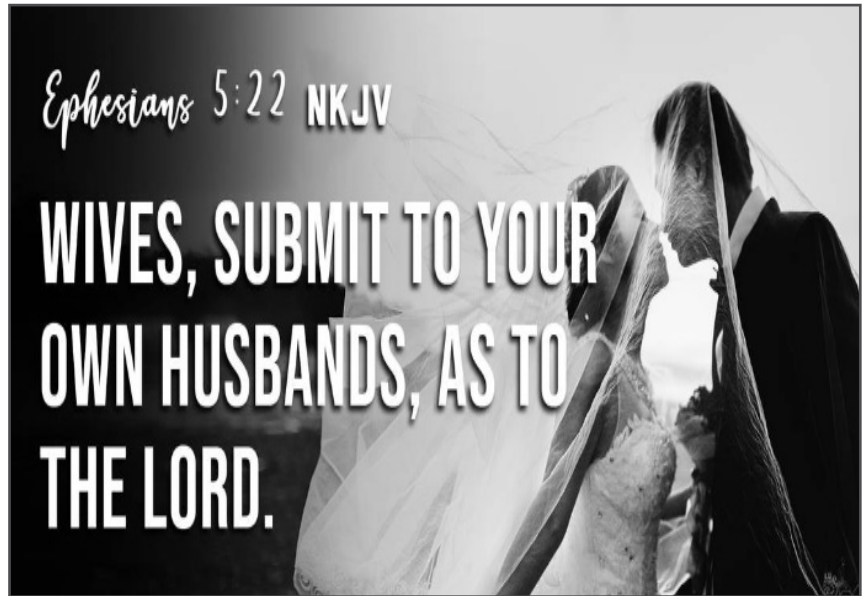
What affect has the blurring of distinctions and roles between men and women had upon society, the church and the family?

With these things established, we can begin our analysis of the verses. Paul states that he wants them **to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God** (v. 3). To understand what Paul means, we must define the term **head**. But that's not easy in this context because Paul seems to invest it with two meanings in this passage: authority and source. For example, we describe the one who has authority or control over a committee or organization as its **head** (see [Eph 1:22-23](#)). On the other hand, we describe the source or origin of a river as its **head**. We'll briefly look at how Paul uses the word **head** to describe the three relationships mentioned in this verse: man/Christ, woman/man, and Christ/God.

In what sense is **Christ the head of man**? As God, Christ obviously has authority over all creation, and thus, He rightly expects us to submit to His will. At His ascension, for example, Jesus declared that He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth to commission His followers to proclaim the gospel and make disciples ([Matt 28:19-20](#); [John 14:5](#)). Yet, Paul—and indeed all Scripture—also identifies Christ as the agent of creation and thereby the source of mankind—the very source of life itself (see [Col 1:16](#); [Rom 11:36](#); [Heb 2:10](#); [John 1:3](#)). This foundational role as Creator foreshadows the theme which Paul will develop in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, where he describes the inherent order with which God purposefully imbued creation itself to maintain order and accomplish His will.

In what sense is **man the head of woman**? Again, this concept carries a two-fold connotation. In the context of a marriage relationship, Paul teaches that the wife should submit to her own husband ([Eph 5:22](#); [Col 3:18](#)). This is not a blanket command requiring all women to submit to all men; rather, it is specific to the marriage relationship. Nor does Paul intend to imply that women are inferior to men, as some have mistakenly charged. Instead, his teaching is about functionality within God's created order. From the beginning, God established a social order to foster unity and mutual support. However, sin distorted this order, introducing a power struggle between husbands and wives ([Gen 3:16](#)). Whereas marriage is to function as one body—husband and wife complementing one another—differences of opinion will invariably arise. In these moments, Scripture instructs the husband to lovingly lead his home to seek the Lord and abide by His will ([Eph 5:25-27](#)). As we saw earlier, Jesus and God the Father provide a perfect model of how this should be done ([Luke 22:39-46](#)).

Based on Paul's appeal to creation later in verses 8 and 9, we can also describe **man** as the source of **woman**. In the beginning, God created **man** (Adam) first from the dust of the ground, breathing life into his nostrils ([Gen 2:7-9](#)). When no suitable counterpart was found among the animals for him, God caused a deep sleep to fall on the **man** and fashioned **woman** (Eve) from one of his ribs ([Gen 2:22-24](#)). In a sense, therefore, Eve literally came from Adam—a point which Paul will make explicit in verse 8.



In what sense, then, **is God the head of Christ**? As we have already established, Christ willingly submitted to the Father's authority. As God the Son, Jesus certainly possessed full authority and power to act independently. Yet, for the sake of fulfilling God's redemptive plan—and to model perfect submission—He chose to submit His own will to the Father's. Jesus Himself said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" ([John 5:19](#)).

Alternatively, if Paul's use of head here means "source," it points to the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus "came from the Father" into the world: "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father" ([John 16:28](#)). This does not imply that Jesus was created by the Father, but rather that the Son left His position with the Father to take on human flesh and dwell among us, becoming the perfect sacrifice who offers eternal life to all who believe.

What does Paul wish to convey with these comparisons? Paul's goal is to remind the Corinthians that God designed the world with an innate order—a structure that allows everything in heaven and on earth to function properly according to His purpose. Although sin has disrupted this order, Christ came to restore it. In Christ, both the nuclear family and the church should reflect this divine order, bringing glory to God. Within this order, God designated the man as the spiritual leader of the home and the woman as his complement. Together, they are to cultivate a home that seeks the Lord and fosters an environment where every member uses their unique traits and

distinctive giftedness to serve Him. The church functions in much the same way: each member contribute their God-given gifts in harmony with others for building up the body of Christ. This discussion of order, therefore, sets the stage for Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in chapters 12 through 14, where he will emphasize the need for unity, cooperation, and the proper use of gifts for the common good of the church.

Question  
# 4

In what ways has sin interrupted the order God created for the home? How should men provide effective, God-ordained leadership in both the home and the church? What happens when there is a void in that leadership?

Having established the divine order for the proper functioning of the church, Paul now turns to the specific issue of attire worn during worship—particularly regarding the head. He notes that **every man** who prays or prophesies with **his head uncovered dishonors his head**, which by implication dishonors Christ, as we established in the previous verse (v. 4). Like many aspects in this chapter, this phrase is difficult to interpret. Literally translated, it reads, “He who has his head down dishonors the head.” Three main possibilities have been proposed to understand the historical context of this phrase: a literal head covering, similar to those worn in the pagan cult of Isis. This view has substantial historical support and fits with Paul's concern about incorporating pagan practices into Christian worship. Long hair, which in the Greco-Roman world symbolized homosexuality or effeminacy ([1 Cor 11:14](#)). This would align with verse 14 where Paul emphasizes that long hair is a disgrace for a man. Or it could refer to a prayer (see [Deut 22:12](#); [Matt 23:5](#)) or covering the head as a sign of mourning (see [Est 6:12](#)). However, this is the least likely option, since Jewish men in Paul's day did not typically cover their heads in prayer; this practice became popular several centuries later. Regardless of the specific practice, Paul's point





Paul's point is that whatever the men were doing to cover their heads was causing a distraction and dishonoring Christ during worship.

Next, Paul contrasts this practice with women, asserting that **a woman** who prays or prophesies **with her head uncovered dishonors her head**; it is as if she had shaved her **head** (v. 5). Here, too, scholars propose three main interpretations for understanding the historical situation: short hair, indicative of a lesbian or masculine identity in Greek culture. However, this seems unlikely given verse 15, where Paul notes that a woman's hair is given to her as a covering which implies long hair. It could also refer to letting the hair down loosely, which in many cultures at the time was associated with marital availability or even prostitution (see [Lev 13:45](#); [Num 5:18](#)). Or finally, it could refer to praying without a veil or head covering, although this was not universally practiced in the first century. In any case, whatever the specific practice, the point is that the women were acting in a way that brought dishonor to their husbands—culturally considered a serious breach of modesty and marital faithfulness. At that time, a veiled head signified respect for one's husband, while an unveiled head could imply scandal or sexual impropriety.

In 1 Corinthians 11:6–7, Paul summarizes his argument thus far for wearing proper head coverings during worship. For women, failing to cover their head is dishonoring, akin to having her head **shaved**—something considered disgraceful in that culture. For men, however, covering the **head** while praying or prophesying dishonors Christ, their head. This isn't just about outward appearance, but reflects deeper theological truths regarding honor, authority, and role fulfillment. So, Paul adds that **man is the image and glory of God**, while **woman is the glory of man** (v. 7). The word **image** in this context means a representation, picture, or reflection of something. In one sense, as God in the flesh, Christ is the exact representation of God in human form. By taking on flesh, Jesus showed us the exact nature and character of God in a way to which we could relate (see [John 1:1-3](#); [Heb 1:1-3](#); [1 Cor 8:6](#)). Not only did He come to show us how to have life through Him ([John 14:6](#)), but also how to live righteously in accordance with God's holy character ([John 14:15-18](#), [21-24](#)).

### Question # 5

How do (should) we reflect the character of God in our roles in marriage and in the church?

Similarly, God created man—both male and female—in His **image** ([Gen 1:27](#)) to represent Him to the rest of creation as a steward or caretaker by reflecting His righteous character. Together, husbands and wives fulfil this calling as they live out their God-given roles within marriage. Husbands, for example, are called explicitly to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her—a tall order indeed ([Eph 5:25](#)). Wives, on the other hand, are called to explicitly submit to their husbands as to the Lord and respect him ([Eph 5:22](#), 33). When both roles are live out in Christ, marriage becomes a living reflection of God's love, sacrifice, and order. In this way, fulfilling these roles glorifies God and reveals His divine character.



Because God patterned life in the church after marriage, rightly fulfilling our God-given roles in the body and using our giftedness creates an environment that facilitates growth and brings glory to the Lord, too. In this context, **glory** means to bring praise or honor to (see [Mal 1:6](#)). Both men and women glorify and honor to God by fulfilling their roles, as we've seen in Ephesians. To challenge these roles or redefine based on cultural preference undermines God and brings dishonor to both the husband and wife. It upends God's plan instilled within nature itself, bringing about chaos, disorder, and unnecessary dysfunction.

Adam, the first man, demonstrates this vividly. God tasked him with being the spiritual leader of his home, but he failed. When the serpent came to deceive Eve, Adam was right there. Scripture doesn't record him doing or saying anything to protect his home against the serpent's deception. Instead, he stood silently and then ate the fruit when Eve gave it to him. In many ways, Adam was even more culpable because he failed to fulfill His God-given role as the spiritual leader and protector of his family. Rather than honoring God, Adam and Eve chose to sin, disrupting their fellowship with him and bringing dysfunction and death into the world.

To summarize: in the Corinthian church, their practices—particularly their

attire during worship—blurred the distinctions between male and female and challenged the roles God originally created to bring stability and order to society. This confusion detracted from the gospel and distracted from the mission of the church. Later, in chapter 14, we'll see that some women were even publicly challenging and disrespecting their husbands, causing disorder in the congregation and undermining God's plan for the family. Here, though, they brought dishonor by likely dressing immodestly or in a way that conveyed sexual promiscuity—all in the name of newfound freedom in Christ.

Question  
# 6

How do we see the problem of blurring gender distinction and ignoring roles creeping into the church today? How does this undermine the gospel and cause problems?

At the same time, husbands were also misusing their freedom, dressing in ways that blurred their masculine identity and brought confusion. Instead of being clear examples of Christ's righteousness and modeling how a family should conduct itself, they dishonored the Lord by challenging gender distinctions and redefining roles. By rejecting the structural order God designed, they not only caused confusion in the church but also undermined the gospel message itself. For this reason, Paul calls them back to a more honorable, distinct way of living—one that reflects God's original design and brings stability and honor to both the family and the church.

Question  
# 7

How has our culture attempted to redefine what it means to be masculine? What harm has that caused?

## 1 Corinthians 11:8-10

### REFLECT THE ORDER OF GOD'S CREATION:

Paul grounds his argument in the creation order to highlight the roles of both men and women. In 1 Corinthians 11:8, Paul says, “**Man is not from woman, but woman from man**,” referencing Genesis 2:18-19, where woman was created from the rib of man. He also states that **man was not created for woman, but woman for man** (v. 9). This is not a statement about a woman’s inferiority or subjugation. Rather, it underscores the divine order established by God at creation. God created man and woman as counterparts, each with unique roles to play in His purposes for the world. The key here is that complementarity rather than hierarchy is the focus. Man and woman were made to fulfill different but equally valuable roles, each contributing to God’s design for marriage and the family.

Paul’s point is not that one gender is more important than the other, but they are designed to complement one another in their roles—husbands and wives working together to glorify God and reflect His image. This aligns with other Scriptures that talk about the



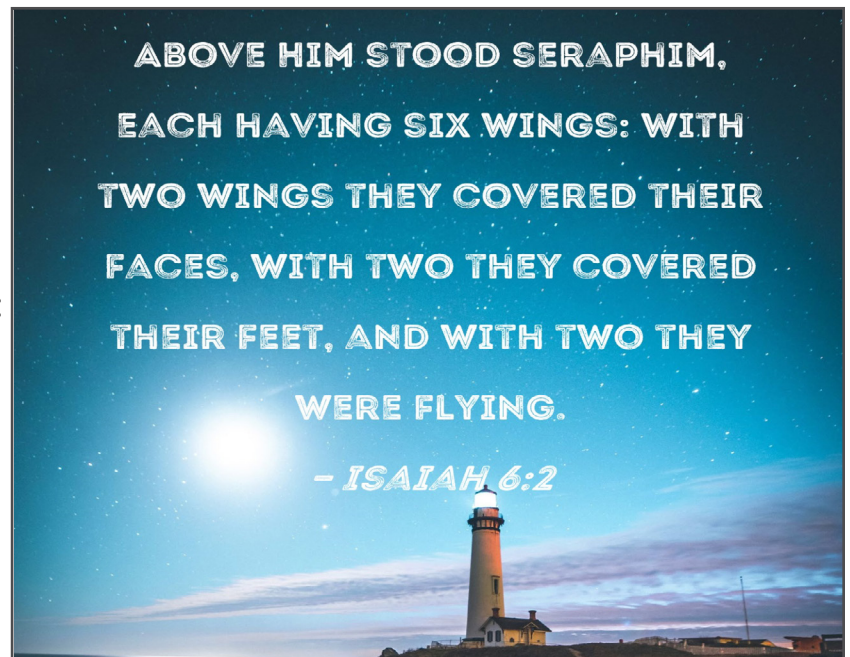
varied responsibilities in marriage ([Col 3:18-19](#); [1 Pet 3:1-7](#)). The goal is not to establish dominance, but to live in a way that brings glory to God through the loving, sacrificial relationship He has designed between husband and wife.

Paul’s instruction in verse 10 that women should wear **a symbol of authority** on their heads is tied to the idea of submission in the marriage relationship. The veil or head covering serves as a visible symbol that a woman is faithful or submissive to her husband, allowing her to move freely in public without dishonor or reproach. It’s important to note that the “**authority**” in this context is not abusive or authoritarian. A husband is called to love his wife and care for her as he would his own body ([Eph 5:28](#)). Just as no one in his right mind would mistreat his own body, a loving husband will nurture and protect his wife, and in turn, she will naturally submit because she knows



her husband has their best interests at heart. Unfortunately, we don't have time to unpack the broader biblical theme of submission here, but it's important to remember that in the Christian context, submission flows from a loving relationship that mirrors the relationship between Christ and the church.

One of the most difficult phrases in this passage is **because of the angels**. Several explanations have been proposed. First, some suggest that **the angels** represent church leaders who were distracted or disturbed by the behavior of the women. However, this interpretation seems unlikely, as Paul typically does not speak allegorically in this way, and **angels** is not used elsewhere at this time by New Testament writers to refer to church leaders. Second, another theory is that Paul is referencing the fallen **angels** who lusted after human women ([Gen 6:1-2](#)), implying that their modesty could somehow entice angelic beings to lust. This interpretation has its own problems: First, it relies on another obscure Scripture to interpret this verse which is also difficult to understand. Second, **angels** are generally depicted in the Bible as asexual, which makes this theory less convincing.



Finally, the most plausible explanation is that Paul is alluding to the **angels** in Isaiah 6:2, who cover themselves in the presence of God's holiness. Just as the angels demonstrate reverence and modesty in God's presence, Paul expects women to display modesty and respect in their dress, particularly in worship, reflecting God's holiness. In this view, the **symbol of authority** on a woman's head is a **symbol** of her submission to God's order and her recognition of His holiness. Ultimately, the head covering serves as a visual representation of a woman's recognition of God's design for authority within marriage and the family. It's a reminder that her actions—both in dress and in behavior—should honor God and reflect His holiness. It's not just about cultural customs, but about living in a way that acknowledges God's sovereignty and order.

## 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

### **REALIZE WE OWE EVERYTHING TO GOD:**

To emphasize our connectedness in Christ and dependence on one another, Paul reminds us that **man is not independent of woman** or **woman independent of man** (v. 11). God designed us to complement and help each other—we need one another. To illustrate this point, Paul appeals the generations that follow creation: although the first **woman came from man**, each successive generation come through the union between man and woman, resulting in childbirth (v. 12). Even so, Paul reminds us that everything ultimately owes its existence to the Lord Himself! His point is clear: God designed us to work together. If both male and female owe their existence to the Lord and He designed us to fulfill specific roles, then we ought to abide by his plan.

Question  
# 8

How does our culture today challenge or contradict the gender roles God created? How should we respond as individuals and a church?

## 1 Corinthians 11:13-16

### **RECOGNIZE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN:**

To conclude, Paul begins this section with a series of rhetorical questions that connect back to verse 5 and the heart of his argument. He asks them to **judge for** themselves: **Is it proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered** (v. 13)? He follows this question with one directed toward men: **Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair it is a dishonor to him** (v. 14)? Both questions emphasize that nature itself makes a distinction between men and women. Paul isn't issuing a universal command against long hair on men, for Paul himself wore long hair for a period ([Acts 18:18](#)). Rather, it is a general analogy: even in the natural world, physical features, such as hair length, distinguish men from women.

Both of these questions support Paul's central argument. The natural order—God's design in the physical world—reflects physical distinctions between males and females. If God created us with these differences and assigned us different roles, then we should embrace them and use them to glorify the Lord—not challenge them and seek to blur the lines. When we ignore these distinctions, it brings disorder and confusion, harming both the society and the church. Therefore, Paul urges them not

to be contentious, but to embrace their differences and use them to work together to glorify God as the church (v. 16).

To summarize this complex issue—without oversimplifying it—Paul’s main point is that the Corinthians’ attire in worship and behavior blurred the God-given distinction between male and female, distracting them from focusing on Christ. God created men and women with distinct roles, but sin corrupted those roles, leading to friction and disorder.

**I praise you  
because I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;  
Your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.  
Psalms 139:14**



Christian freedom does not give believers the right to overturn what God established from the beginning. So, what should we take away from this passage? We should avoid distracting others in worship—whether through our attire, our conduct, or the way we exercise our spiritual gifts and roles. Instead, we are to remember that Christ came to restore us to a new creation—reflecting the order God intended before the Fall. We should embrace our unique roles and distinctive gifts, not envy others or seek power, but use them to glorify the Lord, just as Christ modeled for us during His earthly ministry.

Psalm 139:14 declares, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works and that my soul knows well.” God didn’t make a mistake when He formed us in our mother’s womb. He created us distinctly and uniquely exactly the way He wanted us so we could fulfill a specific role in His creation. When He created us, He instilled us with different roles to fulfill in the family to glorify Him. And when He saved us through Christ, He also gave us distinct roles and gifts to use in the church to glorify Him and build His kingdom. Rather than envying others’ giftedness or struggling for position and power, we ought to embrace the roles God has called us to fulfill and serve joyfully.

Despite the empty talk about promoting and embracing diversity, society has tried to blur the lines between male and female to the point of erasing any distinction, allowing people to choose what gender they want to be. Furthermore, they have

rebelled against design for marriage and the family, seeing the different roles between husband and wife as old fashioned and outdated. But what God designed in the beginning was perfect until mankind corrupted it through his sin. God established these distinctive roles in the home—as well as the church—to maintain order and allow the world to function as He intended. Through Christ who has made us a new creation by removing our sin and guilt, we can return to God’s original design for the family—and by extension the church. Let us serve faithfully in the different roles to which He has called us, using our distinctive gifts and personalities to work together to take the gospel to the entire world.



## *Incorporate*

In what ways might we unintentionally blur the lines or roles between men and women through our words, actions, and attitudes? How is this dangerous not only in our culture, but to the mission of the church?

How am I using my giftedness to build the church and spread the gospel? How does my giftedness fit with or work together with others' gifts in the church?

What confusion has our society introduced to our children concerning gender roles? How can we properly teach and model biblical gender roles to our children? What would that specifically look like and why should we be explicit in our efforts to teach them?

*June 15, 2025*



# ***A New Covenant Remembered: Part 1***

## ***1 Corinthians 11:17-26***

Focal Verse:

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

1 Corinthians 11:26

## Introduce

As a single adult, I've learned that if I don't make the effort to go places or do things on my own, I'd probably sit at home doing nothing productive at all. Yet, for some reason, many people seem shocked when I tell them that I vacation alone—often interjecting, “You went by *yourself*.” While I don't usually dine out here in town unless I'm with others from church, my recent vacation to Florida forced me to eat out a few times since my schedule didn't allow me to cook at the campground. Every time I walked into a restaurant, I was met with the same reaction from the hostess—an almost surprised, “*Just you?!*”

Once seated, I would wait patiently for my server to come by and at least ask what I wanted to drink while I looked at the menu. But I noticed a pattern: no matter which restaurant I went to—whether a national chain or local favorite—the server always took a long time to approach my table, even if the restaurant wasn't particularly busy. Often, I waited over ten minutes before someone even acknowledged me. Meanwhile, I watched servers tend to tables of two or more guests, some of whom had arrived after me.

When my server finally did come, it took even longer for her to bring me water and take my order. Though she had no control over how fast the kitchen prepared the food, I still had to wait a while before my meal was served. During that time, servers continually checked on other tables—refilling drinks, fulfilling requests, and asking how everything tasted—but rarely returned to my table to check on me. I was lucky if I got one refill during the entire meal! Yet, when it came time for the check, my server returned with haste and promptness.

Despite this lackluster service, I always left a generous tip. Although there might have been other reasons for the treatment I received, I couldn't help but wonder if it had something to do with me being single. Maybe the server assumed she wouldn't get that much of a time from me. After all, a 20% tip on one meal will always be less than a 20% tip on two or more meals. Even though, in theory, the quality of service shouldn't depend on the size of the party, it seemed clear that the servers prioritized



## Introduce

tables where they expected to earn more.

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-26, Paul addresses a similar problem in the church at Corinth. Like the servers in the restaurants I visited, the Corinthians showed favoritism—this time not for parties of two or more, but for the wealthy over the poor. In doing so, the rich segregated themselves from the poor. While purporting to celebrate and remember Jesus' sacrifice for them through the Lord's Supper, the wealthy displayed animus by excluding the poor from the meals that they shared. They certainly didn't display the same love and grace that Christ had shown them! This infuriated Paul who strongly condemned this attitude and took steps to correct it. In Christ, regardless of our ethnicity, social status, or human achievements, we are all one body. We have all been saved by grace through faith in Christ.

Even though the body of Christ is diverse, God has called us to work together in unity without division—to glorify Him, help one another grow spiritually, and share the gospel with the world. The Lord's Supper should unite us—not divide us—by reminding us of Jesus' sacrificial death for everyone. So, let us not show favoritism, separate ourselves according to worldly standards, or divide ourselves into cliques. Instead, let us unite in Christ. As we partake of the Lord's Supper, may we remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for our sins as well as our calling to put the community over our individual desires so that we can collectively do His will as His people.

Key  
Question

In what ways do we experience favoritism in the church today? How does that hinder the ministry of the church?

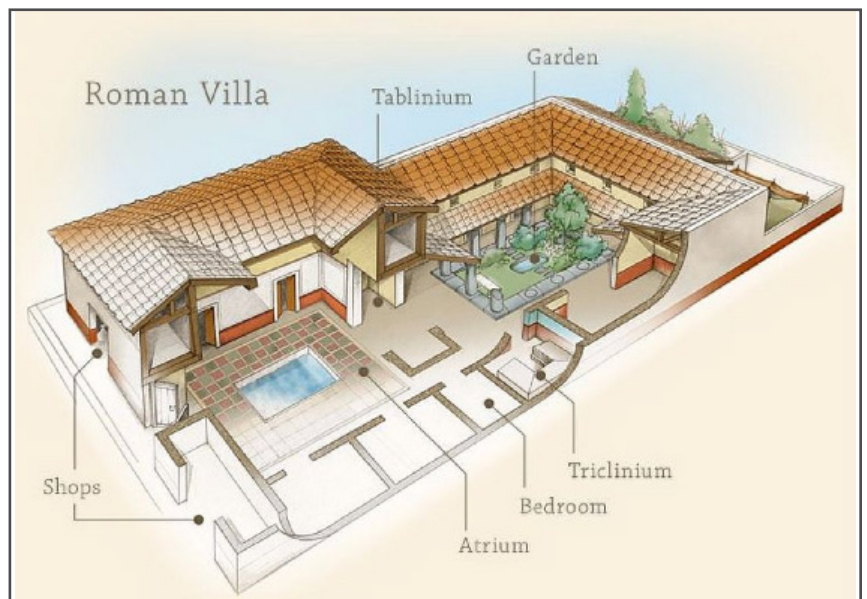


## 1 Corinthians 11:17-19

### THE CHARACTER OF THE SERVANT:

Although Paul continues addressing the dysfunction within the Corinthian church, he **now** shifts his focus from the issue of attire—which had caused trouble by blurring gender distinctions and downplaying their God-given roles—to their abuse of the sanctity of the Lord’s Supper. Instead of conducting it in a way that encourages and unites every believer in Christ toward their shared purpose of serving the Lord, the Corinthians have turned it into an event for the elite to flaunt their wealth and social standing. Writing very tersely and to the point, Paul literally pens, “But this which I declare, **I do not praise**” (v. 17). Today, he might say it this way: “I have no **praise** for what I’m about to tell you.” This stands in stark contrast to the **praise** Paul offered in verse 2 for the Corinthians’ adherence to the traditions he handed down to them.

He has no **praise** because when they **come together** corporately in the name of celebrating the Lord’s Supper, **it is not for the better but for the worse**. In other words, nothing good comes from their gathering as a church; in fact, their meetings are doing more harm than good! Paul has heard—likely from the members of Chloe’s household



who had reported the problem in the first place ([1 Cor 1:11](#))—that **when they come together as a church, there** were **divisions among** them (v. 19). Unlike the **divisions** in chapter 1, which centered on the personality of the preacher and personal preference, these **divisions** were based on social class and status: the wealthy looked down on the poor members of the congregation when they met together for worship.

When the members of the local church in Corinth gathered from across the city, they would divide themselves into groups based on wealth and social standing. To understand what may have been happening during their meetings, we must first consider the layout of a typical first-century Roman house. Usually, the dining room (*triclinium*) would seat approximately nine adult males. This room would open to a

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larger atrium or vestibule, which acted as a corridor to four or five other rooms. Based on the typical dimensions of the atrium, it would likely accommodate between twenty and forty additional people—serving as overflow for larger gatherings, such as those of the early church.

Just as in many churches today, the poor in the Corinthian church far outnumbered the wealthy, who owned the homes in which the congregation met. These aristocratic homeowners would likely have reserved the dining room and the best seats for their family members, close friends, and other invited guests of similar social standing. In that culture, guests of high social status were customarily seated in the dining room as a sign of honor. Moreover, the wealthy often enjoyed more flexible schedules and greater leisure time, allowing them to arrive at the meetings earlier than the poor, who were still at work. By arriving early, the wealthy could secure the prime seats and start the festivities before the poorer members even had a chance to arrive. Consequently, the wealthy in the church began seeing themselves as entitled to special privileges and preferential treatment—including access to the best food and drink.

### Question # 1

In what ways might we possibly see a rift or schism between social classes in the church today?

As a result, the well-to-do in Corinth likely flaunted their wealth by gorging themselves on food and drinking excessively in front of the poor. While the rich indulged, the rest of the assembly received only scraps or leftovers—even if that. The attitude of the wealthy in Corinth brings to mind Jesus' account of the beggar named Lazarus who laid at the gate of a rich man hoping to eat the "crumbs that fell from [his] table" ([Luke 16:19-31](#)). At this time in the first-century Corinthian church, each member appears to have brought his own food to eat. Yet, the rich did not share with the poor. To make



matters worse, several severe famines caused the price of food to skyrocket. The rich, who could easily afford to buy food in excess still refused to share with their poorer brothers and sisters, who could barely afford meager rations each day. This attitude stood in stark contrast to the humility and compassion of Christ, who considered the needs of others above His own.

To apply Paul's teaching in this passage properly, we must pay close attention to the context. Paul is writing to address the gulf between the rich and the poor within the church, not between the church and the secular world! God has not called the church to function as a social welfare agency for the unbelieving world; rather, He has charged the church primarily with proclaiming the gospel to all nations. However, within the body of Christ, God has called the church to care for its own members and to meet their needs as they arise.

Throughout the New Testament, the church consistently prioritized the needs of its own members above those in the secular world. For instance, believers in the early church often sold their property or possessions, pooling the proceeds to meet the needs of fellow believers in their local congregations ([Acts 2:44-45](#); [4:32-35](#)). In addition, Paul also organized a collection among the Gentile churches in Macedonia and Greece to aid the church in Jerusalem during a famine—not to provide relief for the entire city ([1 Cor 16:1-4](#); [2 Cor 9:1-5](#)). Likewise, in Acts 6:1-7, the church in Jerusalem distributed food and daily essentials to their own widows, not to every widow in the city.

Later, in 1 Timothy 5:3-16, Paul outlines how the church in Ephesus should care for widows in their congregation, but he places the primary responsibility on their immediate family before the church steps in: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" ([1 Tim 5:8](#)). This principle underscores the biblical priority: the church must first meet the needs of its own members before turning its



attention to the broader secular world when it comes to “social ministries.” Among the unbelieving world, the church should focus on proclaiming the gospel!

At the same time, this doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t help meet the needs of the secular community as a way to spread the gospel and share the love of Christ. Rather, it does mean that we should be strategic and selective when we do. The gospel—not simply meeting a physical or material need—must always be the center of our outreach. We should never seek to meet the needs of an unbeliever without sharing the gospel with them.

Sadly, many churches today have become little more than social welfare agencies that make people “feel good” about helping others, yet fail to address the deepest spiritual need for salvation. What good is it to meet a temporary, earthly need but neglect the eternal soul? If we meet their physical needs but ignore the gospel, we leave people still headed for eternal destruction. Therefore, the focus of the church should primarily remain on meeting the needs of its members first. Only then—according to God’s leading and as opportunities arise—should we seek to meet the needs of unbelievers, making sure that the gospel remains central in all we do.

### Question # 2

How would you evaluate the balance between “social ministry” and verbally sharing the gospel with people you’re helping?

Furthermore, the church should reject the idea of “random acts of kindness” as our culture defines it—like paying for someone’s meal at the drive-thru or helping in other anonymous ways. Our goal isn’t to draw attention to ourselves or receive praise for our generosity, but to share the gospel! Just as Jesus taught, we shouldn’t broadcast our good deeds ([Matt 6:1-4](#)). However, even when we perform these good deeds anonymously, we should still be intentional about sharing the gospel. If we act anonymously without explaining why, how will anyone know that our motivation is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ? To them, it will simply look like a good deed for which they’ll be grateful—but that’s all.

Instead, we should be purposeful and strategic in how we help people in the secular community. If God does lead you to pay for someone’s meal anonymously at a drive-thru, hand a gospel tract to the cashier and ask him to give it to the people in the



car for whom you paid— and be sure to give one to the cashier too! When you give out a tract, make sure it includes relevant details about our church—such as the address, phone number, and website—so they can reach out for further help or information. This week prayerfully ask God to give you opportunities to minister to others in the community here in northern Tarrant County and be intentional about sharing the gospel with them when He does!

Question  
# 3

What are other ways in which you can still share the gospel and point people to the local church when you minister to people anonymously?

In some ways, we don't face the same struggle between the rich and poor that the church in Corinth did, because most churches today are relatively homogenous. Depending on their location, churches often consist of people from similar socio-economic backgrounds to those in the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, churches in the inner city will typically have a higher concentration of individuals on fixed-incomes or minimum-wage earners. Conversely, churches in the suburbs with the majority of blue-collar workers will tend to be middle class while churches in affluent areas will often have more wealthy members. This doesn't mean that class distinction no longer exists within today's churches, but rather that the disparity is not usually as stark as it was in Corinth.

Before discussing potential problems, let's first identify some of the ways the church is already doing well in bridging the gap between social classes today. For example, the church often provides scholarships for members—and sometimes guests—to participate in camps, mission trips, seminars, retreats, or other events. The



church may also organize fundraising opportunities in which the entire congregation can participate to help offset the costs of these events. Additionally, some churches

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share curriculum or supplies—such as VBS materials—with other congregations that may not have the resources to purchase them.

Furthermore, financially capable members often hear of needs among those less fortunate and take steps to meet them anonymously without fanfare. They might pay a utility bill, contribute toward unexpected medical expenses, donate a car or other necessary equipment, or provide meals or groceries for those in need. This is a beautiful picture of the church working together as it should—caring for the needs of its members! Moreover, the church may also provide physical labor for those who don't have the capacity to complete certain projects—such as lawncare, house cleaning, auto repair, or even light construction. In all, members often use both their giftedness and resources to help meet the needs of others in the congregation.

Question  
# 4

In what ways have you seen our church collectively meet the needs of someone in our body?

In what ways can the church fail in this endeavor to unite various social classes into one cohesive body—and thereby create division which distracts from its mission? Unfortunately, some members may use their tithes and offerings as leverage to influence the direction of the church and shape it according to their personal preferences. In doing so, they begin to view the church as a business rather than the body of Christ. By contributing significantly, these members see themselves as shareholders who expect a say in the church's operations. Those who give the most then may feel entitled to the most power and influence. In return, these wealthy donors are given key positions on committees, granting them even greater control over the church's direction. If they become angry, dissatisfied, or don't get their way, they may threaten to stop giving or even to leave the church altogether—both of which are unbiblical responses. As a result, some pastors and leaders may bend over backward to keep these influential contributors happy—sometimes even ignoring Christ's direction as the head of the church!

God, however, expects us to give our tithes and offerings generously out of our love for Him and a desire to obey His commands—not because of what we hope to receive in return or the power we might expect to wield through our financial gifts. These latter expectations reflect the self-centered thinking that plagued the church

in Corinth. Sadly, the consumerist mindset of our culture and nation has crept into the church today. We have far more people who want the church to cater to their preferences and serve them than we have those who will sacrificially work together to serve Christ, helping the body mature spiritually and sharing the good news of Jesus with the world.

Yet perhaps where the church fails most in this endeavor is by being too compassionate that it creates a sense of dependency on the church for material needs rather than relying on Christ for all our needs. After feeding the 5000, Jesus faced this same problem. When He crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee



for quiet meditation, the crowd pursued Him—not because they wanted to hear more of His teaching or learn how to have eternal life, but because they wanted more food to eat ([John 6:26-27](#)). Jesus rebuked them and tried to reorient their thinking to spiritual matters rather than physical ones, but many became disillusioned and left because they didn't get what they wanted ([John 6:66](#)). Sadly, many churches today unintentionally perpetuate this mindset instead of addressing the problem as Jesus did. In the name of compassion, they continue helping people even though those individuals refuse to take responsibility for their actions and persist in making unwise decisions.

We need balance. God has called us to exercise discernment in how we help others. We must avoid cultivating a sense of expectation or entitlement, and we must not enable people to continue making poor choices when they have the mental and physical capability to make better ones. For example, if someone is physically able to work but simply refuses to get a job, we shouldn't help them. Scripture is clear: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" ([2 Thess 3:10](#)). This mindset of refusing to work should not be rewarded. It is quite different from someone who has been laid off and cannot quickly find another job or who cannot make ends meet despite working diligently. The same principle applies when providing food, clothing, or housing to

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those who abuse controlled substances, like alcohol and drugs. If they are willing to repent and seek treatment for their addiction, we should help them by all means. But if they continue to exploit our help as a means of buying drugs or alcohol, we cannot continue to enable their addiction. It is not compassionate to allow them to continue down an unwise and destructive path!

### Question # 5

In what ways must we be discerning about helping people? In what other ways has the church created a spirit of entitlement and dependency through its compassion?

Often, churches, mission agencies, and parachurch organizations have good intentions in helping people as a means of sharing the gospel. However, in doing so, they sometimes create a spirit of dependence instead of actually leading people to Christ and helping them mature in their faith. Two years ago, I went with the youth on a mission trip to Oklahoma City, where the Southern Baptist missionaries “training” us to do mission work spent more time on redefining homelessness as “persons experiencing homelessness” than they did on teaching the children to be discerning and help them in the right way. Certainly, people’s physical needs don’t diminish their need to hear the gospel—but those needs do determine how we should respond to them.

The missionaries conducting the training seemed to become highly agitated with me because I continually questioned their lack of emphasis on discernment. We cannot simply help people indiscriminately. Throwing money and resources at a problem, as our own government has proven, won’t resolve the issue of homelessness! At the same time we’re sharing the gospel, however, we also need to ascertain the root of the problem that has led to their homelessness—or any other issue for that matter—before we can even attempt to help.

If it’s an addiction, for instance, we should help them





check into a rehab program—providing housing alone won't solve the root of their problem. If it's a lack of skill and training, we need to help them learn marketable skills, how to write a resume, and search for a job—again, housing alone won't solve the problem. If poor money management and unwise financial decisions are the cause of the problem, we need to teach them to budget and help them eliminate unnecessary expenses—providing housing alone won't fix the problem either. Each situation is unique. We must take the time to understand the underlying issues and discern the best way to help. But even as we do that, we must look beyond the immediate physical need and share the gospel with a sense of urgency. That is our priority as the church!

Question  
# 6

Why must we always determine the root cause of a problem before we try to help? What is the danger of just jumping into help when we don't fully understand the nature of the situation?

In summary, God has called us to work together as His people to accomplish His will, regardless of our ethnicity or background. Within the church, He has called us to ensure the spiritual well-being of one another as we grow together in faith and meet each other's needs as they arise. Our primary responsibility, therefore, is to meet the needs of fellow believers rather than those of unbelievers outside. Conversely, our priority with unbelievers is to set a good example by living out a consistent testimony that reflects the character of Christ and ensuring they hear the gospel. When we do meet the needs of others—whether those in the church or those in the broader community—we need to do so in the right way. We should point them to Christ rather than creating a sense of dependency on the church, and we need to help them in a way that doesn't enable harmful or unwise practices but instead offers a solution that addresses the heart of their issue.

In verse 19, Paul ironically notes that he expected these **factions** to exist **among** them, so that **those who are approved may be recognized as genuine**. If Paul has just called for unity, why should he expect these divisions? Three proposals have been offered. First, Paul could be using irony to sarcastically say that there must be these social divisions so that they can determine status and rank among them, thereby actually condemning their thinking. This seems least likely because he has stated upfront that he finds nothing they're doing praiseworthy. Using irony to condemn their

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actions would only prove too confusing!

Second, Paul could be referencing Jesus' teaching about the differentiation between the sheep and the goats in the last days ([Matt 7:15; 24:11](#)). This type of testing helps Christians discern whether other members of the fellowship are genuine believers or not ([Matt 7:15-21](#)). This interpretation would fit well with the emphasis on being **approved**



or genuine. In the Greek, the word **approved** refers to the testing of metals—particularly coins—to determine if they are authentic. In fact, we still practice this today by using a chemical solution to test a small sample of precious metals like gold or silver for authenticity. Similarly, with our paper currency, we use a special pen on twenties and hundreds: if the mark turns yellow, the bill is genuine; if it turns black, the bill is counterfeit. Nevertheless, if Paul intends to refer to Jesus' teaching on this subject here, he does not make it explicitly clear.

Finally, Paul could once again be borrowing from the Corinthians' own slogan to condemn it. Since he has already stated that he has no praise for anything they're doing in this matter, Paul doesn't need to "correct" or "qualify" their statement as he has done elsewhere in the letter; instead, he has completely condemned this type of thinking wholeheartedly. This statement would then suggest that the Corinthians believed they had already arrived at the last days. Because they saw themselves as "spiritual" and considered themselves "perfect," they felt they could judge with absolute certainty who was a genuine believer and who was not. With this so-called spiritual discernment, they divided themselves into groups—likely based on the worldly standard of success through wealth and status. This interpretation makes the most sense when considering the historical context of the letter and the Corinthians' overemphasis on their own spirituality.

## 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

### **A DINNER THAT DIVIDES:**

When the Corinthians gather as a church for a meal, they believe that they are honoring the Christ by celebrating **the Lord's Supper** in remembrance of His sacrificial death (v. 20). But Paul points out that they're actually dishonoring the Lord because of their divisions and sinful behavior. It's likely that **the Lord's Supper** was part of a much more substantial fellowship meal—just as the meal Jesus shared with His disciples in the upper room was part of the larger Passover celebration. The early church often partook of the Lord's Supper within the context of this communal meal, which was frequently called a “love (*agapē*) feast” (see [Acts 2:42](#)).

However, the Corinthians had lost sight of the true purpose and meaning of **the Lord's Supper**, turning it into an individualistic celebration rather than an opportunity for corporate worship. Some were gluttonously gorging themselves on food while others



were drinking in excess and becoming drunk. To make matters worse, they were not sharing their food or drink with others in the congregation, thereby widening the divisions in the body. In fact, they would consume the majority of the food and drink before the rest of the church even arrived. For this reason, Paul highlights their selfishness by pointing out that **each one takes his own** dinner ahead **of others**, leaving **one hungry** and another drunk (v. 21).

Paul thoroughly reprimands the Corinthians for their selfish behavior. He expresses his disapproval by declaring that he has no praise at all for them in this matter, because they are humiliating the poor and sowing division within the body (v. 22). While Paul is not condoning excessive eating and drinking—which are both sinful—his rhetorical question makes it clear that they have private homes where they can entertain selected guests as they wish. But when they come together as the church, they must act as one body, focusing on glorifying Christ through their attitudes and actions.



### 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

#### **A DEATH THAT DELIVERS:**

Now, Paul redirects the Corinthians' attention to the true meaning of the **Lord's Supper**, which symbolizes the sacrifice Christ willingly made so that all believers could have life through Him. He begins by reminding them that he had passed on this ordinance just as he had **received it from the Lord** (v. 23). In this instance, Paul likely does not mean that he **received** the ordinance directly from Jesus in the same way he **received** the gospel in Galatians 1:16. Rather, Paul is saying that Jesus Himself specifically commanded and instituted this meal ([Luke 22:19](#)). Moreover, he is faithfully transmitting this tradition, which he likely **received** from the apostles who were present with Jesus at the Last Supper that **night** in the upper room.

In verse 23, Paul makes a subtle play on words between **delivered** (in reference to the ordinance of the **Lord's Supper**) and **betrayed**—both translating the same word in Greek. Nearly every modern translation renders the second occurrence of this word as **betrayed**, referring to Judas' act of turning Jesus over for thirty pieces of silver ([Matt 26:15](#)).



However, the word could also plausibly be translated as **delivered** or “handed over” in the sense of Jesus willingly giving His life as a sacrifice for others. Jesus Himself emphasized this in John 10:18: “No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

This second translation—handed over—would actually better serve Paul's purpose. He wants the Corinthians to understand the selfishness of their behavior in contrast to Christ's selflessness. Instead of acting like individuals in a free-for-all during the **Lord's Supper**, the Corinthians must think in terms of the community's well-being. This ties back to the principle that Paul has championed since chapter 8: that believers should seek the spiritual well-being of others rather than exercising their personal



freedoms selfishly. They must follow the pattern of Christ, who willingly laid down His life for the benefit of others. In the same way, they should set aside their own agendas and individual pursuits to advance the cause of Christ through the church.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper traditionally begins with the breaking of **bread** and giving **thanks**—just as Jesus did during His last Passover with His disciples (vv. 23b-24). The giving of **thanks** centers on remembering God's blessings, especially the gift of life we have through Jesus' death in this context. More importantly, it's not the **bread** that is being "blessed" in the sense of saying grace before a meal and thanking God for His provision for our daily needs in the modern sense in which we think. Rather, Paul wants the Corinthians to reflect on the bread's symbolism—Jesus' **body** given for us, beaten and **broken** for our deliverance from sin.

During the Passover in Exodus 12, the **bread** and bitter herbs reminded the Israelites of God's deliverance from bondage in Egypt ([Exod 12:8](#), [14](#)). For Christians, the **bread** now symbolizes Jesus' body offered in death. The **Lord's Supper**, then, is a memorial—a way to remember what Christ has done for us through His death. It's not an event that holds some mystical power to save or transform on its own. Traditions like those of the Roman Catholics—which claim that the **bread** and **cup** literally become **the body** and **blood** of Christ through transubstantiation—are completely misguided.

Therefore, both Jesus ([Luke 22:19](#)) and Paul emphasize that the meal is to be celebrated "**in remembrance**" of Christ. Like the Passover, it beckons us to recall God's deliverance—this time not from slavery in Egypt, but from sin and death through Jesus' sacrifice.

Likewise, the Lord's Supper serves as a powerful reminder of

Jesus' self-sacrifice, where **His body** was bruised, battered, and beaten before He was hung upon the cross to die for our sins. Isaiah 53:12 paints a vivid picture of this sacrifice: "Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the



transgressors.” Both Jesus and Paul emphasize that the **bread is given for you**. This highlights the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death: He died in our place so that we would not have to die spiritually, but instead could be cleansed from sin and receive eternal life ([1 Cor 15:3](#); [Rom 5:6, 8](#)).

### Question # 6

What is the danger of the Catholic view of the Lord’s Supper where the bread and cup become the literal body and blood of Christ? How can we help people understand the right way to view the elements?

At the **Lord’s Supper**, the meal separated the bread from **the cup**. This is reflected in Paul’s account when he says that “**after the meal**” Jesus took **the cup** (v. 25; see [Luke 22:20](#)). **The cup** symbolizes Jesus’ **blood** poured out for our sins. This theme is deeply rooted in the Old Testament: Exodus 24:8 underscores that the covenant was ratified by the **blood**, while Isaiah 53:12 points to Jesus’ pouring out His **blood** to bear the sins of many. Moreover, Hebrews 9:22 also reinforces the necessity of **blood** for the forgiveness of sins: “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” Paul also highlights that **the cup** represents the **new covenant** ([Jer 31:31-34](#))—a **covenant** characterized by the internal transformation of the heart. Thus, in the Lord’s Supper, **the cup** reminds us that Jesus’ **blood** was shed to establish a new relationship between God and man—a covenant based on His sacrifice for our sins once-and-for-all—something which the law was powerless to do on its own.

Finally, Paul notes that the Lord’s Supper is to be observed repeatedly, though he does not prescribe a specific frequency. The Bible offers no formal instruction on how often we should celebrate it, but whenever we do, our focus must remain on Christ’s sacrifice rather than our own selfish desires and earthly needs. Unlike the Passover, which is only an annual reminder of God’s deliverance from Egypt, the Lord’s Supper is to be celebrated regularly. Every time the church gathers to celebrate it, believers must be reminded of the body and blood of Christ, which signify His sacrificial death on our behalf.

By participating in the meal, the Corinthians—and all believers—**proclaim** their radically transformed lives in Christ. They are to follow His example, considering their actions carefully: How do they represent Christ to others? How do their behaviors

impact the unity and well-being of the church? And how do they advance God's purposes through their lives? In all these ways, the **Lord's Supper** serves as both a remembrance and a proclamation—a call to live out the sacrificial love of Christ in our daily lives while we also remember His voluntary sacrifice that He made on our behalf. Something which the Corinthian church had forgotten! Let us not follow the pattern of the Corinthians, but follow the example of Christ so that we reflect His sacrificial love in our daily lives while we seek to do His will—the true meaning of the Lord's Supper rightly applied!

## Inspire

Even though we may not all have experienced slow service in a restaurant because we were alone—like I did in Florida—most of us have likely felt the sting preferential treatment that left us excluded. Perhaps we were the last one chosen for a team sport because we lacked coordination or athleticism. Maybe we were left out in the office when coworkers went to lunch or placed a group order. Perhaps we weren't invited to a party, and we learned that everyone else literally got an invitation. Nevertheless, we cannot let such division exist within the church when it comes to worship. Although we all have different roles and gifts, we are called to worship and serve together in unity. The Lord's Supper reminds us of that unity in Christ, who died for each of us without partiality. Therefore, let us remember this new covenant in Christ every time we partake of the Lord's Supper together as a church. And let us apply its principles in our lives: showing sacrificial love, serving God faithfully, and working together to accomplish His will through the church, as God has called us to do.

## In-depth Information



\* The Greek word translated by the NKJV as **"takes his own supper ahead of others"** literally means "to eat beforehand." Most modern translations interpret this phrase in this sense, implying that the wealthy Corinthians simply ate before the poorer members could arrive, leaving them with little or nothing (NIV, NAS, NRSV, NJB, and NKJV). However, recent scholarship suggests that the word can also carry the nuance of devour or consume gluttonously. This meaning aligns with Paul's rebuke of their excessive drunkenness—indicating that the rich were not only eating before others could arrive, but they were also gorging themselves on the food, further aggravating the problem and dishonoring the communal nature of the Lord's Supper.

## ***Incorporate***

What steps can you take to avoid cliques or divisions when our church gathers for meals or fellowship?

How does remembering Christ's sacrifice at the Lord's Supper impact the way you treat other believers?

How might regularly remembering Christ's sacrifice challenge your priorities and decisions throughout the week?





*June 22, 2025*



# *A New Covenant Remembered: Part 2*

## *1 Corinthians 11:27-34*

Focal Verse:

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

1 Corinthians 11:28

## Introduce

Invented in the late nineteenth century and peaking in popularity during the 1940s and 50s, coin-operated scales—where you could guess your weight—became all the rage at fairs and amusement parks. Unless someone had recently weighed himself or had a consistent metabolism where his weight didn't fluctuate, he'd most likely have a tough time guessing accurately. While people sometimes overestimate their weight, the human tendency is to underestimate it—shaving off a few pounds to make ourselves feel better. In general, as humans, we struggle with self-evaluation. We tend to view ourselves as more capable—and even more morally upright—than we truly are.

For example, we have the expression: “My eyes were bigger than my stomach,” which excuses us for overestimating how much food we can eat, often leading to an overloaded plate. We also say, “I’m not as young as I used to be,” to excuse ourselves when we attempt a project or physical activity that proves to be harder



than expected and leaves us sore the next day. Moreover, we often underestimate the time required to complete a task, leading us to overcommit or, worse, rush through just to get it done. We constantly misjudge our abilities, physical strength, time management skills, and so forth.

In the summer of 2021, I went on a mission trip to Seattle, Washington, with the youth group. On our day of rest, we visited Snoqualmie Falls, just outside the city in the Cascade Mountains. To see the falls initially, there was a short hike along the ridge to a viewing platform. But some of the youth wanted to hike to the bottom of the falls, to another platform near an old powerhouse. With a fairly steep incline, the trail wound down the side of the mountain for a mile. Coupled with the altitude, it made the hike challenging even for the fittest. Before we set out, we reminded the youth that however far they hiked down, they must hike back up—and no one would be there to carry them should they tire.

Most of the youth set out with enthusiasm down the trail with confidence, certain

## Introduce

they'd have no problem. At the half-way point, we reminded them again that they'd have to climb all this back up. This prompted a few to turn around and head up the mountain, and a couple chose to rest on a bench and wait. But most pressed forward with vigor and excitement. On the descent, there were no complaints and the youth displayed boundless energy. However, as soon as we turned around to ascend, the complaints began. Many had severely underestimated the challenging conditions and overestimated their abilities. All the way up, several of them grumbled and expressed regret for hiking to the bottom.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, Paul calls the church to a serious and honest evaluation of their behavior as they partake of the Lord's Supper. This is something each of us must do as well—we must seriously examine our lives. Because the consequences of partaking in the Lord's Table in "an unworthy manner" are severe, we cannot afford to take this lightly. We cannot afford to misjudge our behavior or fail to see where we may fall short. For this reason, we must ask the Lord—who never errs and always declares the truth—to help us examine ourselves accurately. Then, we must be willing to act on His evaluation in a way that honors Him and builds up His church. As we celebrate this new covenant Christ established through His death on the cross, may we examine ourselves to ensure that we are living in the transformed way that He expects.

### Key Question

Since Christ has called us to examine ourselves, how would you assess your life today? How would that be similar or different to how Christ would evaluate you?

### 1 Corinthians 11:27-28

#### **THE EXAMINATION OF SELF:**

In these verses, Paul continues his critique of the Corinthians' behavior at the Lord's Supper and fellowship meal. He does this by highlighting the results and implications of their actions: they are under God's judgment. **Therefore**, Paul warns that **whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord** (v. 27). To understand Paul's argument correctly, we must first define what he means by partaking in **an unworthy manner**. His primary concern is that the Corinthians are causing unhealthy divisions in the church instead of coming together in unity to glorify the Lord as He intended. These divisions—especially between the rich and the poor—bring shame and dishonor to fellow believers and, by extension, Christ Himself.

The Corinthians have lost sight of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, turning it into a drunken, gluttonous feast. Instead of following Christ's selfless example of sacrificial love, they are self-seeking, prioritizing their own interests at the expense of the entire community. They are displaying the type of self-centered,



individualistic mindset that still plagues our culture today. Instead of thinking communally, as God has called us to live together as His people, many think only about what benefits or pleases them personally. The more isolated we become through such choices, the more disconnection and dysfunction we experience, because God created us to live in community—not as self-serving individuals.

Question  
# 1

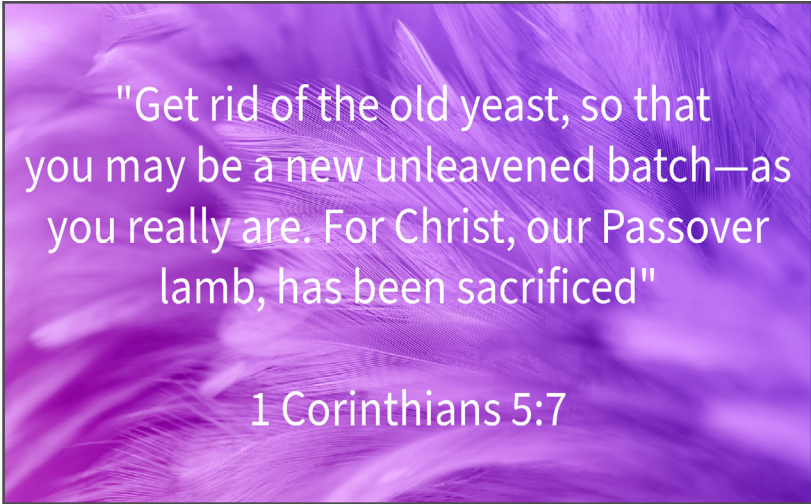
What attitudes, beliefs, or things promote a spirit of individualism in our culture instead of community? How have they affected the church negatively?



Paul's secondary concern is that the Corinthians are not living genuinely transformed lives as they partake of the Lord's Supper. In our Western mindset, we typically think of eating in **an unworthy manner** simply as personal, unconfessed sin that hinders our fellowship with the Lord. While that's certainly part of it, Paul's concern here is much broader: they are actually practicing all kinds of sin and debauchery, which is destroying the community's reputation and the fellowship within—both with God and one another. From the letter so far, we see that sin was rampant in their community: divisions ([1:10-17](#)), spiritual arrogance and pride ([4:8-13](#)), sexual immorality ([5:1-13](#); [6:15-20](#)), frivolous lawsuits ([6:1-11](#)), and engaging in activities that have the potential to harm other believer's spiritual well-being ([8:13](#)). Thus, Paul's emphasis here is how our "individual" sins affect the community as a whole.

While we are each responsible for our own choices—and God will judge us individually according to our own actions—Paul emphasizes that we are also accountable for how our actions affect the community. Sadly, relatively few people today think this way when they act. Even if they do evaluate the consequences of their actions, they primarily consider the effect they may have upon them personally. In contrast, Paul's main concern is not merely the judgment we will incur for our personal sins, but the way our individual sins harm the fellowship of the church and negatively reflect on the character of Christ to those outside the body.

Furthermore, Paul already alluded to the damage that sin causes within the body by referring to it as "leaven" in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. Instead of celebrating and affirming sin, the church should take measures to get rid of it completely. Just as a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough, a "little" sin in the church will negatively affect the entire body. That's why Paul says emphatically, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" ([1 Cor 5:7](#)). Here, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul undoubtedly has this same imagery still in mind and calls for the church to rid itself of its sinful divisions and debauchery when partaking of the Lord's Supper.



"Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"

1 Corinthians 5:7

If eating in **an unworthy manner** primarily refers to the effect our individual sin has upon the church, then what does Paul mean by being **guilty of the body and blood**? He uses this language to stress the serious nature of their sin. He is reminding the Corinthians that their offense is not just against one another—but ultimately against Christ Himself. Sin is not some trivial mistake to be taken lightly or dismissed flippantly; it is rebellion against the One who gave His life for us so we might have eternal life. Yet, our sin has a multifaceted effect on our lives. Not only does it hinder our relationship with Christ, but it also fractures our relationships within the body as well, detracting from the mission to which God has called us.

Our Western mindset often associates this guilt mentioned here primarily with our personal sin. While that is certainly part of Paul's meaning, his concern is once again much broader: the Corinthians are **guilty** of destroying unity within the body and, in doing so, distorting and forgetting the meaning of the Lord's Supper. They are failing to live in a way that reflects Christ's sacrificial love as commemorated through this meal, thereby making a mockery of it when they claim to be celebrating it. Thus, Paul's secondary emphasis is the Corinthians are not living transformed lives in light of the gospel. But still his primary concern is how their individual guilt—rooted in their self-centered, divisive behavior—is damaging the entire community. In dishonoring one another, they are dishonoring Christ, whose body they claim to represent!

Question  
# 2

When you evaluate your choices, actions, and attitudes, how often do you evaluate them in terms of their effect on the church?

Instead of taking the Lord's Supper out of routine and forgetting its meaning, Paul urges the Corinthians to pause and **examine** themselves. Before eating **the bread** and drinking **the cup**, **each man should** carefully **examine himself** (v. 28). Traditionally, this has often been interpreted to mean personal reflection—evaluating whether we are in right standing with the Lord and whether we have unconfessed sin that needs repentance. Indeed, this is an important discipline that should be part of our daily walk with Christ, not just limited to when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. However, Paul's instruction goes beyond personal introspection; it calls us to think communally as well.

While we should reflect individually on our attitudes and actions, we must also consider how they impact the church as a whole: Have my actions reflected Christ and

## Instruct

how they affected the unity and health of His body? We should **examine** our lives in relation to the community of believers, recognizing that the Lord's Supper is not just about individual devotion, but also about our shared witness as Christ's body. This means evaluating how we display Christ's love—memorialized in this meal—through our daily conduct and relationships.



Jesus gave similar instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, highlighting the importance of relationships within the body: "Therefore if you bring your gift [i.e., offering] to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" ([Matt 5:23-24](#)). To worship God rightly, we must also be in right relationship—not just with Him, but with our brothers and sisters in the body. As we **examine** ourselves in light of Christ's sacrificial love demonstrated on the cross, we must also consider how our choices and actions affect others. This shifts our focus from an isolated, self-centered perspective to a community mindset, helping us see the bigger picture of the church family we represent.

### Question # 3

In what specific ways does taking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner affect fellowship in the church and our witness in the secular community?

Our culture has conditioned us to think individualistically. Perhaps no other slogan captures this attitude more poignantly than Burger King's "Have It Your Way." Our culture promotes freedom of expression, personal choice, and individual rights above—and often at the expense of—community. While we should value such freedom and thank God that we live in a country that allows it, we must never forget the value of community—especially within the church! As God's people, we must resist this trend of hyper-individualism and learn to think corporately and communally. In Christ, apart from our personal relationship with Him, the health and productivity of

His community should be our highest priority.

Just as in first-century Corinth, this individualistic—and often self-centered and self-absorbed—mindset poses a grave danger to the church today. It distracts us from advancing the gospel and strengthening the body spiritually because each person is preoccupied with his own individual pursuits rather than the collective mission to which God has called us. People often want the church to be tailored to their preferences, to cater to their interests, and to fit their schedule. Everything revolves around them when it should revolve around Christ and His body—the church!

As God's people united in one local body with one central mission in Christ, we must learn to think collectively. We must resist the temptation to follow the culture in seeking our individual rights and preferences and realize that everything we do—or fail to do—has an impact on the entire body, whether positive or negative. Sadly, most people in the church



rarely pause to consider how their actions affect the community as a whole. They may occasionally reflect on their individual actions and responsibilities—realizing that they have not met the biblical standard and sinned—but they often fail to see how even their ordinary, everyday choices affect the church and its mission.

For example, few people realize how their absence in corporate worship and Bible study affect the church as a whole. Of course, we should care for our bodies when ill, take time to rest on vacation, and sometimes miss for legitimate work obligations. But missing corporate gatherings on a regular basis—whether for weekend trips, hosting guests, or any other reason—does indeed affect the body. It doesn't just affect *you* and *your* relationship with the Lord; it affects the *entire body* with whom He has connected you! The early church met daily to study God's Word, pray, and fellowship—so why is it not convenient for us to gather a few times per week (see [Acts 2:42](#))? Every time we make a decision, we need to ask two questions: How do my actions reflect the transformed life which Christ has called me to live and thereby reflect upon Him



## Instruct

personally? And how do my actions affect the church and the mission to which God has called us? personally? And how do my actions affect the church and the mission to which God has called us?

Question  
# 4

How would you answer these two questions right now today?

In answering these two questions, let us also consider how our actions affect the church and its mission in other areas. Prayerfully consider the following questions, asking God to help you **examine** your life honestly as you reflect on them: How does my participation—or lack of participation—in corporate worship, Bible studies, and events on a regular basis affect the church? How does my sharing of the gospel—or my reluctance to share the gospel—impact the church’s mission to reach the lost? How does my personal prayer life and commitment to studying God’s Word affect the spiritual health and strength of the church? How does my giving of my tithes and offerings to the Lord—or my withholding of them—affect the church’s ability to carry out its ministry? How do my attitudes toward and relationships with other believers affect the spirit within the church? How does my willingness to serve—or my tendency simply to occupy a pew for a couple of hours each week—impact the overall ministry and mission of the church? As you consider your response to these questions, ask God to reveal areas where you can grow in faithfulness and deepen your commitment to Him through His body, so that together we might honor Him and fulfill the mission which He has entrusted us.

Question  
# 5

What other questions would you ask that demonstrate an awareness of how our actions impact the body of Christ?

Each of these areas is equally important in the life of a healthy community, just as God designed it—no single area is more important than another. A giving church with a high attendance in worship is still deficient if it fails to share the gospel regularly. Likewise, a church that regularly shares the gospel and serves is still deficient if it fails to give generously as God has commanded. Simply put, a lack of faithfulness in any one area means the church is unfaithful and disobedient. As James 2:10 declares, “For

whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."

The same principle applies here in Corinthians—not concerning the keeping of the law but concerning faithfulness in the tasks God has given us as His people. If the church is faithful in everything except one area, it is still unfaithful and stands **guilty** before God.

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."

James 2:10

Furthermore, we can apply this same principle to the individual's participation in the church. If every member is not faithful in every area to which God has called us in His Word, then the church as a whole cannot call itself faithful. To be faithful, it takes every member fully doing his or her part—for we are collectively the church. This truth ought to put the seriousness of our participation, attitudes, and behavior within the body into proper perspective. Everything we do matters in the life of the community. Therefore, we must lovingly hold one another accountable to be faithful in every area God has called us as His people.

Question  
# 6

How do weak or absent members hinder both the growth and mission of the church?

Although our strength comes from God, who will ensure that His will is accomplished regardless of how any individual church responds, we must recognize that the church—humanly speaking—is only as strong and healthy as its weakest member. For example, an engine may continue to run even with a missing or defective part. But those faulty parts place significant stress on the rest of the system and can eventually cause major damage. The church functions in a similar way. The “missing” parts—those who refuse to participate—and the “defective” parts—those aligned with sin—put enormous strain on the rest of the body. Although the church may appear to function outwardly, these members are causing serious damage, whether through their sinful behavior, disruptive attitudes, unwise choices, lack of discipleship, refusal to participate, reluctance to share the gospel, or other forms of disobedience.

Certainly, God will hold each of us individually responsible for our choices and any failure to comply in these areas—a topic to which now Paul will turn His attention. Yet, it is also wise to remind ourselves of our corporate responsibility in Christ once again. Through His death on the cross, Christ not only provided us with life, but also transformed us to live in conformity with His example. Therefore, we are to serve Him by loving one another sacrificially and fulfilling the mission to He has given us as His collective body. Our actions, then, reflect not only upon Him, but upon His church as well. This means we must act with unity and love so that we maintain a good witness to the world, grow in our faith, and can effectively share the gospel. Therefore, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, let each of us examine ourselves—not only in light of unconfessed sin in our lives, but also with regard to how our actions affect the body of Christ.



### 1 Corinthians 11:29-32

#### **THE EVALUATION OF GOD:**

God does not take disunity or a lack of community mindset lightly. The Corinthians' abuse of the Lord's Supper—turning it into a drunken feast that divides them and distracts from their God-given purpose—has brought them under divine **judgment** from the Lord. For this reason, Paul reiterates that **whoever** partakes of the Lord's Supper **in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment upon himself** because he has **not** properly discerned **the Lord's body** (v. 29). To understand why they received this **judgment**, we must first unpack what Paul means by the phrase "**not discerning the Lord's body**." The Holman Christian Standard Bible offers a particularly smooth translation of this verse which will help in our analysis: "For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself."

Most likely, Paul intends a wordplay here between the physical **body** of Christ and His figurative **body**—the church. In verse 29, "**body**" primarily refers to the church.

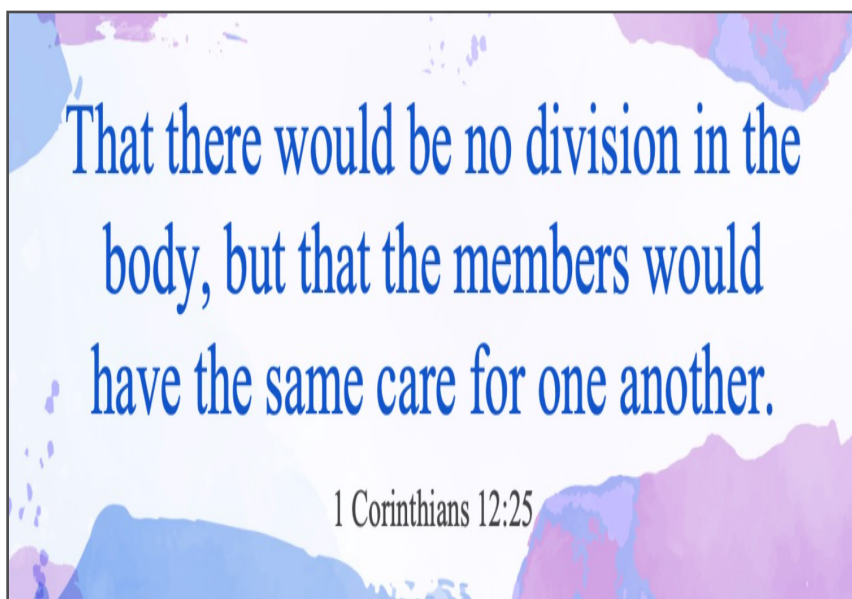
To fail to discern or recognize the **Lord's body** means that the Corinthians have not properly understood the corporate nature of the church in light of their common salvation in Christ memorialized through the Lord's Supper. Rather than serving together in a unified body, they have fostered ungodly divisions based upon wealth and status. In fact, Paul had already condemned this lack of understanding at the beginning of the letter, asking, "Is Christ divided" ([1 Cor 1:13](#)).

In light of the Corinthians' actions and Paul's concern for unity within the church, this sets the stage for his more explicit statement: "There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" ([1 Cor 12:25](#)).

As a result, the Corinthians' participation in the Lord's Supper has brought **judgment** upon

them because they have failed to emulate Christ's sacrificial love and care for the entire **body**—the church. Instead, they are engaging in selfish pursuits, neglecting the needs of others, and undermining the unity that should characterize them as a community. Therefore, their arrogant attitude of superiority trivializes the Lord's Supper and dishonors Christ.

Some interpreters, however, propose that the phrase refers to Christ's physical **body** memorialized through the meal—meaning that the Corinthians were not properly reflecting on His sacrifice as they partook of it. While both the literal (body) and figurative (church) meanings somewhat overlap, it seems more likely that "**body**" here refers primarily to the church—even though he may have both in mind to some degree. Thus, when Paul says, "**not discerning the body**," he signifies that they were failing to recognize themselves as part of a larger community, as implied by the Lord's Supper itself. Instead, they were disenfranchising others and becoming a distraction from the mission God had given them. In this way, the Corinthians were also not truly reflecting on the meaning of Christ's sacrifice during the Lord's Supper either—because they were not imitating Him in their interactions in the church. This further suggests





that they also did not fully grasp the nature of Jesus' sacrificial death.

Question  
# 7

Are there any divisions or schisms in our church which need to be addressed?

Because of their sin, the Corinthians have brought God's **judgment** upon themselves and their community. Before we examine the specifics of that **judgment** in this chapter, it's important to see how God enacts **judgment** throughout the rest of Scripture. God will always judge sin in His own perfect timing. Sometimes His **judgment** may seem delayed from our perspective—allowing people to appear to get away with their sin ([Job 21](#); [Eccl 8:11](#))—but this delay often reflects God's gracious patience, giving us time to repent ([Jonah 3:10](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)). At other times, God's **judgment** comes swiftly. For example, when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about giving all the money to the church that they had received from the sale of a particular property, they fell dead immediately at the apostles' feet ([Acts 5:1-11](#)).

In addition, God also uses different forms of **judgment** based on His divine prerogative and omniscience. Sometimes He brings correction through various forms of discipline ([Heb 12:5](#)), while at other times He judges through specific circumstances: sickness ([Num 12:9-10](#); [Jer 29:16-19](#)), defeat in war ([Judges 2:14-15](#); [2 Kings 17:18-20](#); [Jer 25:8-9](#)), financial ruin ([Prov 15:27](#);

[1 Tim 6:10](#); [Jas 5:1-6](#)), natural disasters ([Gen 6-9](#); [Exod 7-11](#); [Rev 6:12-17](#)), or even death ([1 John 5:16](#))—as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Yet, we must be careful not to automatically equate these events with God's **judgment** in every case. Because we live in a fallen world, bad things can happen to “good” people by no fault of their own, as Job's friends discovered. At the same time, however, neither should we dismiss these events as merely random or unrelated to God's **judgment**. We must evaluate each circumstance prayerfully and biblically, on a case-by-case basis.



In the Corinthians' case, it appears that God executed His **judgment** swiftly in the form of sickness and death. Paul explains that **many are weak and sick among them**—and some have even died (v. 30). Scripture, including Paul himself, frequently uses the term sleep to describe death metaphorically (see [Matt 9:24](#); [John 11:11](#); [1 Cor 15:51](#); [1 Thess 4:13](#)). Most interpreters take this as a literal **judgment**: those who eat and drink of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner may become **sick** or die based on God's divine prerogative.

Others, however, interpret Paul's comments more figuratively, suggesting that those who partake unworthily negatively affect the spiritual health of the church as a whole; thus, weakness, sickness, and sleep refer to the overall condition of the church rather than the individual saints. However, Paul gives no indication that he is speaking figuratively rather than literally here. The abuse of the Lord's Supper by some in Corinth indeed affects the spiritual health and well-being of the church—which is precisely why God brings a literal **judgment** of sickness and death on those individuals!

Therefore, Paul urges us to examine or **judge** ourselves so that we won't fall under the Lord's condemnation:

**For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged** (v. 31).

By examining ourselves rightly—according to God's standard revealed in Christ—we can ensure that we're right standing with Him, walking in righteousness. Being in right with God will naturally foster a community mindset and healthy relationships with other believers in the church.



In such a state, there would be no need for God's corrective **judgment**.

On the other hand, if during self-examination we discover areas where we are not in right standing with the Lord, we still have the opportunity to confess our sins, repent, and be forgiven ([1 John 1:9](#)). If we genuinely repent and align our lives with Christ, we can avoid God's corrective **judgment**. In this way, self-examination leads to restoration rather than condemnation, ensuring our participation in the Lord's Supper is both worthy of His sacrifice and beneficial for the entire body of believers.

Paul now explains the purpose behind God's discipline and **judgment: But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord so that we may not be condemned with the world** (v. 32). In this context, the concept of chastening doesn't seem to involve death, but is a form of divine discipline—correction born out of God's love and intended to restore us when we go astray. Hebrews 12:5-11 reminds us that God disciplines “those whom He loves” and with whom He has a relationship. But why do some, like members of the Corinthian church or Ananias and Sapphira, receive seemingly harsh judgments—even death—while others face milder forms of correction? Ultimately, in His sovereignty, God acts based on His omniscience, infinite wisdom, and foreknowledge. He has access to more information than we do to be able to respond to sin in a just, yet merciful way.

Perhaps, God had already given the Corinthians numerous chances to repent, but they persistently refused. Or perhaps, like Pharaoh during the exodus, their hearts had become so hardened that God knew they would never respond to further discipline—prompting Him to act with swift and severe **judgment**. Though we may not always understand God's ways, we can trust His character. His actions in Scripture reveal a God who is just, merciful, holy, and committed to accomplishing His righteous will without partiality. Therefore, we must take God's discipline seriously. Rather than dismissing or minimizing it, we should regularly examine our lives, making sure we are in right relationship with Him—not just when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, but every day.

God's corrective discipline is not only meant to restore us into right relationship with Him when we go astray, but also to help us have a consistent testimony before the world. Notice how Paul writes that God chastens us so that we may not be condemned with **the world**. In this sense, divine discipline is a gracious act that separates us from unbelievers who reject Christ and persist in their sin. On the day of judgment, when Christ returns to establish His kingdom in full, He will separate

He who believes in Him is not condemned;  
but he who does not believe is condemned  
already, because he has not believed in  
the name of the only begotten Son of God.

**John 3:18**



the goats, unbelievers, from the sheep, believers ([Matt 25:31-46](#)). Unlike **the world**, we as believers won't face the **condemnation** of a second death for rejecting Christ ([John 3:17-19](#); [Rev 20:14](#)).

However, this separation between us as sheep and **the world** as goats is not just a future reality—it has already begun now. Through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, who marks us as God's children ([Rom 8:14, 16](#); [Eph 1:13-14](#)), we are empowered to live distinctively from **the world**. Our lives should reflect a clear contrast—a visible testimony of Christ's presence within us. Therefore, God's discipline helps ensure that we do not live hypocritically or compromise our witness, reflecting negatively upon His Son. Moreover, His correction refines our conduct so that we may reflect His righteousness. The Lord's Supper, then, is not only a reminder of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, but also of the call He issued for us to follow the pattern He established—dying to our old way of life and living in righteousness in Him ([Luke 9:23-24](#); [Gal 2:20](#))

Question  
# 8

In what tangible ways can you point to show that you have died to your old way of life—in other words what evidence of transformation is there in your life? In contrast, what might be some areas in which you still need to die or surrender completely to Christ?

## 1 Corinthians 11:33-34

### THE ESTEEM FOR OTHERS:

In final two verses of this section, Paul summarizes the main thrust of his argument: the Corinthians must practice unity in the church, especially in how they celebrate the Lord's Supper. They are to **wait for one another** so that they may partake it **together** in a manner that honors its true purpose—remembering the sacrificial death of Christ (v. 33). If some are too **hungry** to **wait**, they should **eat at home** beforehand to help them avoid trivializing the Lord's Supper and incurring **judgment** (v. 34). If they don't change their habits and preserve the unity in the church—living out the sacrificial call of Christ to die to ourselves—they risk falling under divine **judgment**. With this, Paul concludes by stating that he will address any additional concerns in person when he visits them. Ultimately, we must celebrate the Lord's Supper with



## *Instruct*

solemnity and unity as one body in a way that glorifies Christ. This sacred act calls us to reflect deeply on His gracious sacrifice provided for our sins and renew our commitment to live transformed lives—lives that imitate His righteousness and demonstrate the power of the gospel to **the world**.

## *Inspire*

As humans, we often struggle to evaluate ourselves honestly and accurately. But God, who sees the heart, provides a perfect assessment of our lives—if we are willing to ask Him and then humbly listen to His response! Since our behaviors, attitudes, and actions reflect not only on ourselves but also on Christ and His body, the church, we must examine ourselves regularly to ensure that we're in right standing with Him. Ideally, this kind of self-assessment should be a daily practice. But it becomes especially crucial when we come together as a church to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds us of Christ's magnanimous and gracious sacrifice that saved us from our sin and moved us from death to life. At the same time, it also reminds us to respond in complete surrender—dying to our old way of life and living in righteousness in imitation of Him. As we contemplate and celebrate the Lord's Supper as His community, may we treat it with reverence, remembering all Christ has done for us and all He has called us to be in Him as His people.

## ***Incorporate***

How does the Lord's Supper challenge you to reflect Christ's character and unity within the church?

How does being in right standing with the Lord help you to have more fruitful interactions with others in the body?

Prayerfully spend time asking the Lord to help you honestly examine your life this week. What did He show you?

*June 29, 2025*



# *A New Call Received*

## *1 Corinthians 12:1-6*

Focal Verse:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.."

1 Corinthians 12:4

## Introduce

In high school, I played alto saxophone for the Madisonville-North Hopkins Maroons, a marching band routinely recognized as one of the top programs in the state of Kentucky. We didn't earn this stellar reputation by acting as individuals doing our own thing, however. We received it because we harmoniously meshed together as one unit with the same goal and purpose. Though we functioned as a single body, the band was composed of many distinct parts: woodwinds, brass, percussion, and the color guard. Each group of instruments had its own distinctive sound and fulfilled its own unique role with each part contributing to the success of the whole. For example, some sections carried the melody—giving the song its recognizable tune—while others played counter-melodies or provided the rhythmic foundation that kept everyone in sync. When each section collectively fulfilled its purpose and role, the result was a beautiful, unified performance.

This same principle also applied to the drill and choreography during the show: each member needed to know his or her precise position on the field as the band moved in unison. Even one person slightly out of alignment—just a few steps off—would distort the entire formation. For example, a single member just a couple of feet out of place could turn a straight line crooked or throw off the spacing between individuals, causing the entire shape to appear uneven and malformed. While these missteps might seem minor to some, they had a major impact on the visual aesthetics of the entire performance!



To maintain unity in both music and movement, it wasn't enough for people to visually follow or audibly listen to the people immediately around them. Doing so would often lead to a phenomenon known as "phasing"—when one side of the band became musically out of sync with the other due to a sound delay and echo in a large stadium. The only way to stay together was to follow the drum major's direction faithfully. Everyone had to focus on that single, central leader to stay on beat and in step.



## Introduce

The church functions in much the same way. In Christ, God has called us into one body, designed to move in unison according to His will. Though unified in one body, we are still diverse. God has given each of us unique spiritual gifts, endowed us with different roles, and called us to serve in various offices, so that together we can build His community and advance the gospel. Just like in marching band, every believer must be in step with the Head—Christ Himself. Through the Spirit’s guidance, we must each hit our mark by faithfully using the gifts that He has given us. While human leadership helps maintain cohesive direction—providing structure and guidance—it is ultimately Christ whom we all must follow collectively. We cannot simply focus on those around us or measure our progress in comparison to others; we must fix our eyes on Christ—our one true Director—and stay in sync with Him. As we study 1 Corinthians 12 in the coming weeks, may we recall this picture of unity in diversity. Though we are many parts, we are called to be one body—working together to fulfill God’s purpose.

Key  
Question

In what ways do you specifically see unity in the diversity which God has assembled here in this local body?

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

### THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT:

As Paul shifts his attention from the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper as a community, he begins addressing another concern the Corinthians had raised in their letter to him—signaled by the phrase “**now concerning**” (v. 1). Just as he did earlier—when warning the church not to repeat Israel's mistakes (1 Cor 10:1ff)—Paul again expresses his desire that they **not be ignorant**. He wants them to understand the truth: the way they are using their **spiritual gifts** is sowing division and distracting them from their God-given purpose. Instead of building the church up as God intended, the Corinthians are tearing it apart through their prideful pettiness and arrogant attitudes.

Nearly every modern translation renders the Greek word *pneumatikōn* (**spiritual**) in verse 1 as “**spiritual gifts**.” However, the term can also mean “**spiritual things**” or “**spiritual people**.” More significantly, this is not the typical Greek word used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer specifically to “**spiritual gifts**.” While modern English makes a clear distinction between terms like **spiritual** and **spiritual gifts**, understanding the Greek roots behind these words will help clarify Paul's nuanced meaning.



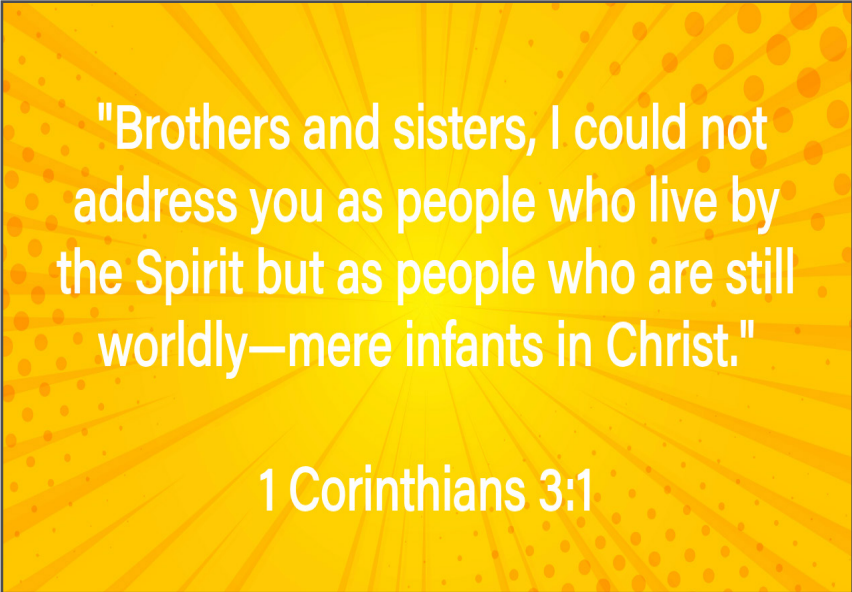
To illustrate: the English word *pneumatic*—derived from the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning “spirit” or “wind” (and the root of pneumonia)—refers today to tools powered by air, such as a *pneumatic* nail gun. In the New Testament, however, the word *pneumatic* meant “**spiritual**.” By contrast, the English word *charismatic* typically describes someone charming and outgoing whose personality is attractive to others. But in the New Testament, *charisma* usually referred to a gracious gift given by God—often translated “spiritual gift” (see v. 4). In verse 1, Paul uses the former—*pneumatic*—to speak more broadly in terms of “**spiritual**,” not *charisma*, the word more directly tied to “**spiritual gifts**.”

So, what does Paul mean by the term **spiritual** in this context then? Simply put, to be **spiritual** means to be led by the Holy Spirit. When we fully commit ourselves to the Lord, we will allow the Spirit to govern every aspect of our lives—our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and relationships. Naturally, those who are led by the Spirit will live differently from the world—not to appear “superior” or “elite,” but because the Spirit is actively transforming them to follow Christ’s pattern of holiness instead of the world’s pattern of selfishness and sin ([Rom 12:1-2](#)). Therefore, truly **spiritual** people won’t create divisions within the church to elevate themselves, gain notoriety, or impress others. Instead, they will reflect Christ through their humble and genuine character, pointing others toward a relationship with Him. Therefore, their distinctiveness is not rooted in arrogance or pride, but in surrender to the Spirit’s call.

The Corinthians, however, were not truly **spiritual** people. Rather than being led by the Spirit, they were driven by their own sinful desires, personal preferences, and individual pursuits ([Jas 1:14-15](#)). In their arrogance, they looked down on others whom they deemed less **spiritual**—a hypocritical stance, to be sure. By claiming to be

“**spiritual**,” they were actually proving themselves to be carnal. Paul had already exposed this contradiction in 1 Corinthians 3:1: “I, brethren, could not speak to you as **spiritual people**, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.” The word translated **spiritual people** there is the same word Paul uses here in 12:1.

In this sense, Paul likely uses the word **spiritual** here in a somewhat ironic and corrective way to confront their self-perceived notion of their “spirituality.” They thought they had mastered what it meant to be **spiritual**, but in reality, they had no clue about what it actually being led by the Spirit entailed! Therefore, Paul states plainly that he doesn’t **want** them **to be ignorant**; he wants them to know what true spirituality looks like—what it means to surrender completely to the Spirit’s leadership. Consequently, genuine *spirituality* is not marked by hypocrisy, contradiction, or division. The Spirit



"Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ."

1 Corinthians 3:1

never leads people to exalt themselves over others in the body or to say one thing and do another—for Paul will make this clear in verse 3 which we will examine later.

On the contrary, true spirituality is expressed in humble, Spirit-led service motivated by love—the very opposite of how the Corinthians were behaving ([1 Cor 13:1-3](#)). Moreover, the Holy Spirit does not create arbitrary divisions within the church or foster competition among believers as they themselves are doing. Neither does He elevate one person's giftedness to suggest that he or she is more favored by God than the other. Rather, the Spirit unites the diverse members of the church into one body, leading us to work together to achieve a common goal: to glorify God through our worship and service.

Question  
#1

Based on this discussion, would you describe yourself as truly spiritual? Why or why not?

In some ways, the modern church has unintentionally stifled service by creating an atmosphere of elitism—where only a select few are seen as qualified and capable of service. As a result, many believers feel unworthy or ill-equipped to serve. Yet Scripture is clear: God has called every believer to serve and He equips us to do so through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. While our specific roles may shift over time—as we mature in our faith and God refines our gifts through experience—our calling to Spirit-led service never changes! The key to our service, therefore, is surrender: We must be willing to follow the Spirit's leadership wherever and however He leads. Over the next few weeks, as a church, this study should lead every member of this body to prayerfully evaluate his or her place of service. To do so, we must ask ourselves honestly: Am I led by the Spirit? Am I serving where the Spirit wants me to serve in this local body? God has uniquely prepared and positioned each of us to spread the gospel and help this church grow—both spiritually and numerically. But this requires each of us to be obedient to our calling, working together as one body to glorify the Lord.

Question  
#2

Do you regard yourself as qualified and capable of serving in this church? Why or why not? How has your view impacted the way you serve?



As we evaluate our areas of service, we must fully surrender ourselves to the Spirit's leadership—both as individuals and as a church. This means remaining open to change as the Spirit leads us to new areas and opportunities for service. For example, as we concluded our study on the Lord's Supper last week, we noted the difficulty of true self-examination. We saw how easily we can overestimate our moral goodness and abilities. This same principle applies to our areas of service: if we are not completely surrendered to the Spirit, we may wrongly assume that we're gifted in a particular area when we are not. That's why we must be open to the Spirit's redirection—through personal conviction, deeper understanding, and even through the loving guidance of others in the church, especially those in leadership whom God has appointed to shepherd the body.

While musical ability is not technically a spiritual gift but rather a natural talent, it serves as a helpful illustration to underscore the need for redirection at times. Some people may consider themselves to be strong vocalists when, in reality, they cannot carry a tune or keep a consistent rhythm. Naturally, someone who is tone-

deaf should not lead worship—whether on a praise team, in a choir, or as a soloist—because it would cause chaos and fail to lead the congregation in edifying worship of the Savior. Members would begin to focus on the quality of the sound rather than the person of Christ, thereby becoming a distraction rather than an enhancement to worship. In such cases, humility and openness to constructive feedback are essential. A loving leader would help these individuals discover different roles in which they could truly thrive and contribute to the church's mission by utilizing the natural abilities they do have!

The same principle applies to spiritual gifts, such as teaching. Some may feel called to teach, yet they struggle to organize coherent lessons or communicate effectively in ways that connect with their audience. For example, teaching is more than simply conveying information or reading notes aloud—it involves guiding others



to understanding and application. A truly gifted teacher will see fruit in the lives of their students: spiritual growth, deeper insight into Scripture, and life change. Just because God has not gifted us in an area of service to which we may aspire, it doesn't mean we are incapable, ill-equipped, or unworthy of service altogether. Rather, it means the Spirit has called and equipped us to serve in another area where we can flourish and contribute to the overall work God is doing in His church. Therefore, our task is to build the body of Christ through Spirit-led service—right where God has called us and gifted us.

Question  
# 3

In what areas of service has God called you to use your giftedness to serve Him in this church? How has He confirmed this? What fruit have you seen as a result of your ministry?

Unfortunately, many churches today face a shortage of volunteers—not because the gifts are lacking, but because the willingness to serve is. In desperation, churches often resort to filling ministry roles with whoever is available, rather than identifying those who are genuinely gifted in that area. Instead of waiting patiently and discerning the right fit, they simply settle for placing a “warm body” in a position, hoping it will somehow work out. But this issue wouldn't exist if every believer embraced his or her God-given call to serve. God has purposefully placed each member in the body to fulfill a specific role, and He has left nothing undone: “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” ([1 Cor 12:18](#)). The problem is not with the design of the body—it's with the disengagement of its members. When individuals choose only to “attend” rather than actively serve, they leave vital areas of ministries under-resourced and under-supported.

Moreover, when members of the church choose not to participate in service, the burden falls disproportionately on the



few who do. Faithful servants are often forced to pick up the slack left by others who have neglected their God-given responsibility to help build up the body of Christ. As a result, ministries begin competing for volunteers, and those who are willing to serve find themselves stretched thin across multiple roles—sometimes far beyond their own capacity. This places unnecessary stress on individuals and can lead to ministry fatigue, frustration, and eventually burn out. In the worst cases, it causes people to step away from serving altogether—or even leave the church altogether. Tragically, some begin to confuse the dysfunction created by human mismanagement with the calling God has placed on their lives. They forget their purpose and lose the joy that they once had from serving—not because they failed in their calling or somehow God had abandoned them, but because the body around them failed to function as the Lord intended.

### Question # 4

How have you seen or experienced ministry fatigue and burn out in the church? What can the church as a whole do to prevent this from happening?

In addition, a church's desperation for volunteers often creates an unhealthy sense of obligation on the part of its faithful servants. Out of guilt or the fear of letting others down, some may become afraid to say "no," and then subsequently step into roles where God has neither gifted them nor called them. Over time, this can also lead to a troubling dynamic where ministry positions are perceived as life-long appointments rather than Spirit-led callings. This sense of being "stuck" can become deeply discouraging. Rather than serving out of joy and purpose, individuals begin to view their role as just another "task" to be done—something to endure rather than embrace. The result is frustration and stagnation—ultimately creating a toxic environment because individuals have lost their joy as well as sight of the ministry goal.

When someone serves merely to fill a gap rather than fulfill a God-given calling, little spiritual growth occurs—for the person serving or the people whom they are serving. Worse still, this dynamic can deter others from fulfilling the call to serve. Even if unintentionally, it sends the message that saying "yes" to a role means signing up for a life-long, inescapable commitment. People begin fearing that by volunteering, they'll lose the freedom to follow the Spirit's leading into new areas of ministry later. And when that fear sets in, they remain on the sidelines—hesitant, disengaged, and unfulfilled.

In addition, many people today reflect the Corinthians' tendency toward personal preference, wanting ministry to be run "their way" rather than genuinely submitting to the Lord and following the direction He has given the church's leadership to implement His plan. As a result, some individuals in specific areas of service begin to view themselves as experts and resist any help from others, believing they have things organized and handled just the way they want them. Rather than working together seamlessly with others in the body, they may push away those who desire to serve—making them feel unwanted or inadequate. Sadly, this can discourage people from ever wanting to serve again. Instead, we must approach these moments as opportunities to disciple or mentor others, helping them discover their place of service in the body. This may involve inviting them to serve alongside us, creating new tasks that include them, or even gently redirecting them to areas that better align with their gifts and abilities.

Question  
# 5

In what ways might I be tempted to want ministry done "my way" rather than submitting to the Lord and His appointed leadership? How do I respond to someone new who wants to get involved but perhaps lacks experience and refinement?

Just as Paul urged the Corinthians, we must regularly examine ourselves to ensure that we're on the right track—using our gifts not to promote our own agendas, but to glorify the Lord. We must honestly ask: Are we truly **spiritual** people? Are we genuinely being led by the Holy Spirit, or are we simply "doing" church in our own strength, according to our own preferences? It's not enough to claim to be Spirit-led in theory; our lives must reflect that reality in practice—not just our individual lives but our collective life as a church as well. When we are led by the Spirit, we will come together as one unified body, worshiping and serving as God intended.

And as each member functions according to his or her Spirit-given calling, we will experience dramatic growth together—both spiritually and numerically ([1 Cor 3:6-7](#)). But this only happens when each person commits to doing his or her part. So, we must ask ourselves: Am I truly being led by the Spirit in my service? Am I faithfully fulfilling my role in this body to help it grow and thrive as God designed? The health of the church depends not on just a few members, but on the faithfulness of everyone serving together.



Paul now contrasts the Corinthians' life in the Spirit with their pagan past. They should be able to discern a marked difference between their lives now in Christ and their former lives as pagans. As Paul reminds them, they **know that**, when they **were** pagans, they **were** led astray **by these dumb** or mute **idols** (v. 2). The difference between their past and present states should be plainly evident to them: no longer do they serve false gods fashioned from inanimate objects by the hands of men who can neither hear their prayers nor respond to their needs. But now, as **spiritual** people, they should recognize that they serve a God who can hear their prayers and answer them in an intelligible way. They should be able to see the fruit of His work all around them—particularly through the transformation they have experienced in Christ.



Yet despite them having a relationship with Christ, many of them were still “**spiritual**” novices, **ignorant** of how the Spirit of God truly works. In practice, they were trying to straddle the fence—attempting to cling to their **spiritual** status while still living by worldly standards. But that never works. They were allowing the same carnal desires they once followed as pagans to shape their decisions once again. Not only was this causing division in the church, but it was also leading them into sinful behavior.

By nature, a person led by the Spirit cannot participate in the sinful activities of the flesh. As Paul declares in Romans 8:5-7: “For those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit . . . so then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” James echoes this same truth with a stern warning: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” ([Jas 4:4](#)).

Question  
# 6

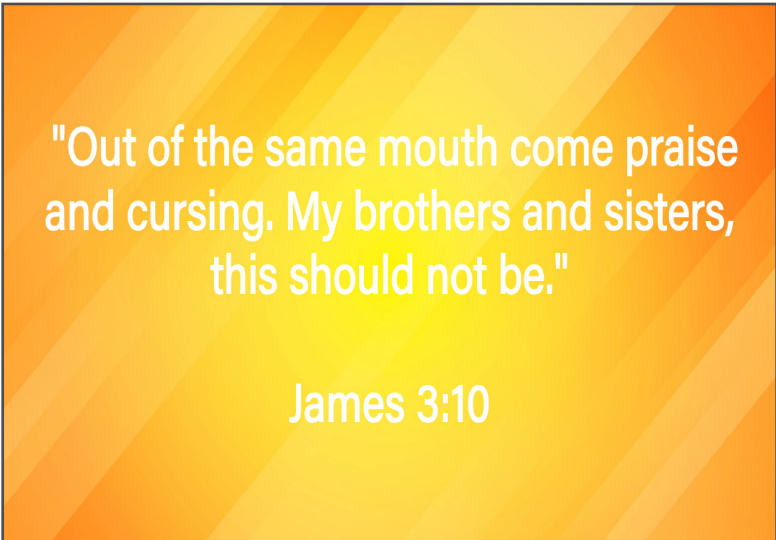
How has understanding God as our inheritance changed your focus and perspective?

For this reason, Paul highlights the hypocrisy present among some in the Corinthian church. Certain individuals were saying one thing while doing the exact opposite. Picking up on the theme of ignorance introduced in verse 1, Paul now explicitly states what he wants to **make known: No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit** (v. 3). In other words, Spirit-led people will demonstrate consistency—not only in their actions but also in their speech. Their words will align with the truth and character of Christ. This is not a matter of mere lip service but a reflection on the inner transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit. James also makes a similar statement about the difficulty of controlling the tongue: “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be so” ([Jas 3:10](#)). While James refers to believers in general and Paul is specifically addressing the “cursing” of Christ, both are essentially making the same point: people who are truly led by the Spirit will not contradict Christ in their speech. Spirit-filled believers will speak in ways that honor Christ and reflect His lordship in their lives.

This statement also paves the way for Paul to address two specific **spiritual gifts** that were creating significant problems in the community:

speaking in tongues and prophesying. The Corinthians had elevated these two gifts above all the others, treating them as marks of spiritual superiority. As a result, a spirit of competition dominated the church, with individuals striving to outdo one another rather than serve together in unity. This imbalance also created a deficiency in other essential gifts needed for the church to function and grow effectively. Even more concerning, in their pursuit of prominence, some even began claiming to speak on behalf of God when, in reality, they were not.

That’s why Paul’s warning in verse 3 is so crucial: no spiritual gift—including speaking in tongues or prophecy—can rightly function apart from the Spirit’s enabling. If someone is not led by the Holy Spirit, their so-called “gift” may not only be ineffective, but even very dangerous. They risk misrepresenting God’s Word and character,



"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

James 3:10

misleading others in the process. Paul's point, therefore, is unmistakable: only those who speak by the Spirit can rightly declare the truth about Jesus. This same standard applies to any expression of spiritual giftedness. Every gift must reflect the unity, consistency, and holiness of the God who gave it to us.

### Question # 7

How can the gifts of the Spirit be used for ungodly, self-serving purposes? What danger does that pose not only to the unity of the church, but also its ability to share the gospel?

Today, there are individuals who masquerade as believers, claiming to have “a word” from the Lord or insisting that the Spirit of God has “revealed” something to them. Yet, what proceeds from their lips often contradicts what God has clearly said in Scripture. Sometimes, their message may sound legitimate—close enough to the truth to deceive—but a careful listener will notice how they subtly twist God's Word, using crafty speech to obscure the truth and mislead others. This is not a new problem. It has existed for centuries. For instance, the Old Testament sternly condemns those who falsely claim to speak on God's behalf ([Deut 13:5](#); [18:20-22](#)). Their words were to be tested by a simple standard—did they come true? If not, they did not come from God.

The New Testament gives similar warnings. For example, John urges believers, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” ([1 John 4:1](#)). The true test is the content of what is spoken: “Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (v. 2). In other words, the message must align with the person and work of Christ and the truth of the gospel. Both John and Paul would agree that anyone who claims to speak by the Spirit must present a message consistent with Scripture. This principle extends beyond our words to our lives as well. Our

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

testimony—both in speech and in behavior—must reflect the truth and holiness of Christ. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the written Word of God or lead someone into error. If we claim to be led by the Spirit, our lives and message must align with the Spirit-breathed Scriptures ([2 Tim 3:16](#)).

Moreover, the consistency of our speech and behavior with the person and Word of Christ serves as a defining characteristic of our life as a genuine believer. While even true followers of Christ may err at times, our lives will no longer be characterized by habitual sin. Instead, the Holy Spirit will constantly work within us, helping us to reflect the character of Christ and produce fruit that aligns with our new nature ([Gal 5:16-25](#)). This stands in contrast to those who claim to believe—those whom Jesus refers to as “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” In time, their true nature will be revealed by the fruit they bear; their motives, attitudes, and actions will become apparent when examined in light of God’s Word ([Matt 7:15-20](#)). They will not just say one thing and do another, but they will also openly mock Christ by blasphemously distorting His Word.

However, this is not a license to become judgmental—for Jesus also warned us to first examine our own lives ([Matt 7:3-5](#)). Rather, it is a call to spiritual discernment, so that we are not misled by outward appearances or deceived by those who seem spiritual on the surface. Though only God knows the true condition of a person’s heart and whether he or she genuinely has a relationship with Him, He calls us to be discerning nonetheless—so that we remain anchored in truth and avoid falling back into the patterns of the world from which He has delivered us.

Question  
# 8

How consistent would you say that you are in your walk with Christ

As believers, why is the consistency of our words and deeds so essential? First and foremost, Christ has called us to live obedient lives as an expression of love for Him ([John 14:15](#)). Yet even more significantly, our actions reflect on Him, because we bear His name as His children ([John 1:12-13](#); [1 John 3:1](#)). For our **spiritual gifts** to be used effectively, we must be led by the Holy Spirit and maintain a consistent testimony—one that is free from hypocrisy. When our lives align with the truth we profess, the focus shifts from us to the person, work, and message of Christ being reflected through us. This is what makes us effective witnesses for Him.

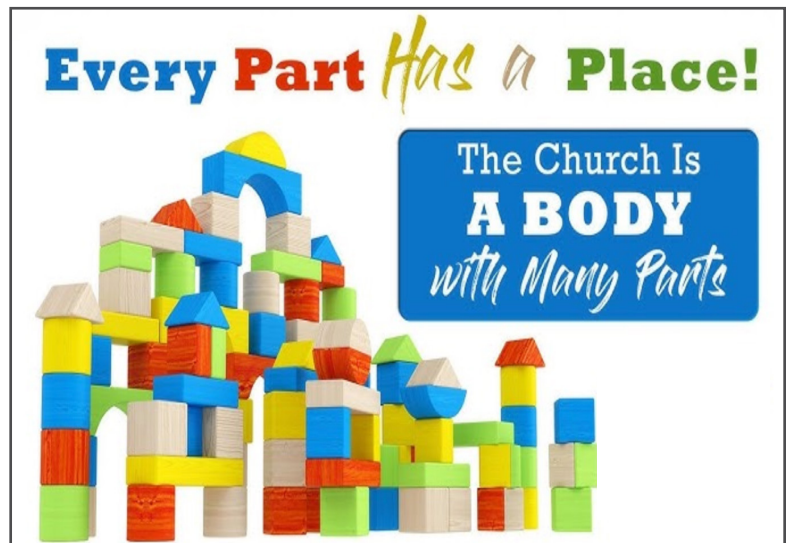


Under the Spirit's guidance, therefore, spiritual gifts serve a two-fold purpose: 1) to build up the church by uniting and maturing believers through faithful worship expressed in service, while also creating a Christ-centered community that supports one another through life's joys and challenges; and 2) to proclaim the gospel to the world through lives that consistently reflect the character of Christ. The church's primary mission is not to "serve" the secular community in a general sense, but to ensure that the message of the gospel is clearly and faithfully proclaimed. For that message to be effective, believers must maintain a consistent testimony—both within the church and in the world. The world must see a difference in us! They should see the character of Christ who has transformed our lives.

Let's take a moment to focus on the second purpose of spiritual gifts—sharing the gospel—because it's often overlooked unless we're referring to the gifts related to evangelism, preaching, or missions. When we talk about spiritual gifts, we tend to limit their use to roles within the church. Most of the time, we confine our service to a few hours on Sunday mornings, and perhaps an occasional Wednesday evening or special event like Vacation Bible School or a missions project—only if they fit our schedules. While these ministries are valuable and necessary for corporate worship and outreach, this is not the full scope of how God designed them to be used.

God intended our gifts to be active all the time—not just for a few scheduled hours a week. He wants us to use them whenever, wherever, and however He gives opportunity, as the Spirit leads. Unfortunately, many believers have developed a limited and regimented view of spiritual gifts, confining them to the church building or a formal church event. But the truth is that God gave us these gifts to help the church grow—not only internally, but externally. That means we must use our gifts both inside the church and outside in the world.

More importantly, every gift—regardless of what it is—should ultimately serve as a means for sharing the gospel. We must move away from the mindset that we use our



gifts only when we “come to church.” Instead, we need to see ourselves as the church—carrying our gifts with us to every place God leads us, for the purpose of building up His kingdom! As we discuss each of the gifts individually in future lessons, we’ll examine how we can best use them not only to edify the body of Christ, but also to testify about Christ by proclaiming the gospel to the world.

Question  
# 9

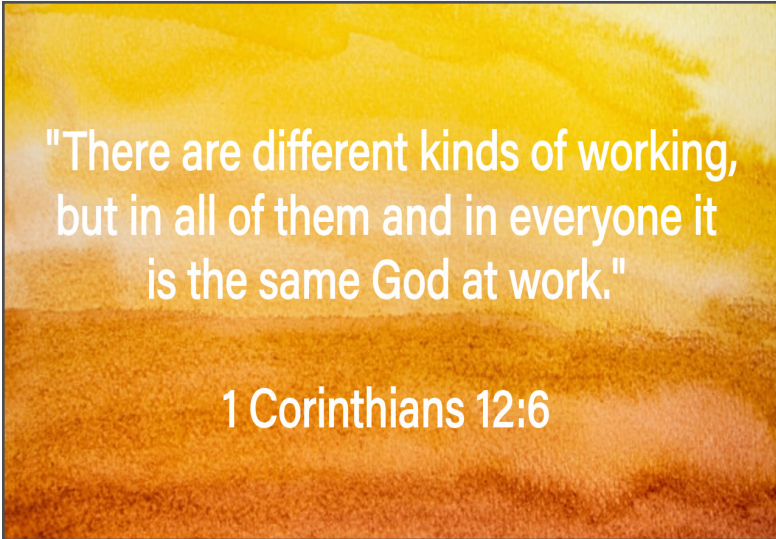
How often do you use your spiritual giftedness to share the gospel?

## 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

### **THE UNITY IN THE SPIRIT:**

Having reminded the Corinthians that spiritual gifts must be used in full submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, Paul now shifts his focus to show how a diverse array of gifts can function together in unity for a common purpose. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, he emphasizes the diversity within the church even more than its unity. Notice the repeated use of the words diversities and differences: there are diversities or varieties of gifts (v. 4), there are differences of ministries (v. 5), and there are diversities of activities (v. 6). This repetition underscores that God intentionally designed His church to be diverse in its function. Yet, despite this diversity, what unites every believer is God Himself. We are unified because we are all led by the same Spirit (v. 4), serve the same Lord (v. 5), and equipped by the same God (v. 6). The triune God is at the center of our unity, and His power working through our differences enables us to come together to fulfill His divine plan.

Today, the Western church often emphasizes unity over diversity because of our cultural focus on individualism—where personal rights, preferences, and individual freedoms are often prioritized above the community. If we’re not careful, this mindset can result in a collection of individuals, each pursuing their own goals, rather than



"There are different kinds of working,  
but in all of them and in everyone it  
is the same God at work."

1 Corinthians 12:6

working together in a cohesive body. In contrast, Paul's message to the Corinthians highlights the importance of diversity within unity. While the Corinthians shared some of our individualistic tendencies, their main struggle was with overvaluing three particular spiritual gifts—speaking in tongues, prophecy, and knowledge—almost to the exclusion of all the others. Therefore, Paul urged them instead to embrace the full spectrum of gifts that God had distributed throughout the church, emphasizing that all are necessary for the body to function as God intended. Whether or context calls for emphasizing diversity or unity, the underlying truth remains the same: the church is composed of many parts, all held together in Christ, working toward the single purpose of accomplishing His will.

Question  
# 10

What gifts do you see most prominently used in the church today? What gifts might seem to be missing? Why do you think they are missing or less noticeable?

Think of the church as a toolbox, and each believer as a unique tool crafted and gifted by God. Inside that one toolbox, you might find a hammer, set of screwdrivers, wrenches and sockets, pliers, and a variety of other tools. Each tool has its own shape, size, and purpose. No single tool is more valuable than the other—it simply has a different function and serves a different purpose. When it comes to building something worthwhile, every tool plays a part. In the same way, God is both the Designer and Master Builder. He knows exactly how and when to use each of us to build His church. He's the one who decides what's needed for the task at hand, and He never makes mistakes in how He assigns or uses His tools. God has placed you in this church for a reason. We're not all the same—and that's by design. We've been gifted in different ways, but we're all called to serve under the same Lord. The question is: Have you made yourself available for His use? And are you allowing the Spirit to lead you so that He can use you in the way He deems best?

Question  
# 11

In what way(s) do you think God has gifted you? Are you allowing Him to use you to build His kingdom in this local church? Why or why not?

To have a successful marching band, diversity must exist within unity. Every instrument and section have a distinct role, yet they must all function together, in sync as one. While they don't share in the exact same tasks, sounds, or rhythms, they must be on the same page, following the lead of a single drum major. Now imagine the chaos if each instrument played in a different key, followed a different time signature, or a marched to a different rhythm—all the while each member marched wherever he or she wanted on the field. The result would be disaster: audibly appalling and visually atrocious! It wouldn't be a performance; it would be an utter mess.

But when a band functions properly—when every part listens to, aligns with, and follows the conductor—the result is something beautiful and pleasant. The same is true for the church. God has given us different gifts, roles, and functions. However, each part must complement the other, working together to fulfill the common goal to which God has called us. Therefore, we're called to operate in unity—as one body, under one Director: God. Each person contributing to the whole matters. So, how are we doing as a church? Are we producing a beautiful symphony pleasing and honoring to the Lord? Or are we producing an unpleasant, chaotic mess because each individual part is doing its own thing while parts some are even missing altogether?



## *Incorporate*

Are you tempted to compare your gifts to others' or view certain gifts as more valuable? How does this passage challenge that mindset?

How do you recognize and value the diverse gifts in others in this church? Or do you tend to expect everyone to serve in the same way that you do? How can we prevent such expectations?

Is there a specific way the Spirit is leading you to serve in this local body? How can (should) you obediently respond to that call?

How can we as a church better reflect the unity described in these verses, while at the same time acknowledged the diversity in our giftedness?

June 29, 2025

Written and Published by  
First Baptist Church of Fort Worth

For more information  
or for questions  
please contact  
[mikeneal@fbcfw.org](mailto:mikeneal@fbcfw.org)

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First Baptist Church of Fort Worth  
**A place to belong!**

5001 NE Loop 820 • Fort Worth, TX • 76137  
(817) 485-7711 • [info@fbcfw.org](mailto:info@fbcfw.org)