

[United] True Worship: honoring Jesus among the body

1 Corinthians 11

MPS: True worship honors Jesus when each Christian regards self and respects others to build unity.

OBJ: Every Christian can honor Jesus to build unity among the body by four instructions.

INTRO In UNITED: together in the gospel, a study of 1 Corinthians, we desire to live as a people united in the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Unity fuels God's people for kingdom mission in the world.**

Worship is the act of giving or showing worth that is due. Congregational worship in the church is the act that gathers the unworthy before the One, Jesus Christ, who is worthy to acknowledge and respond to His worthiness. When the church worships God the Father by Jesus Christ the Son through Holy Spirit, we join with all creation which is continually worshipping Him. (Psa 69:34) Worship that is true is NOT about you, me, us, or any other. We do not ascribe worth to any who are unworthy. And this is why we do not worship one another.

Therefore, since true Christian worship focuses on ascribing true worth to the only One who IS worthy, "HOW" we do "WHAT" we are doing matters. "How" includes our **activity**, like preaching, singing, speaking, praying, and confessing. "How" involves our **posture**. Scripture is clear that posture in worship matters, like lifting holy hands (1 Tim 2:8), bowing (Psa 96:6; Phil 2:10), standing (Neh 8:4; Psa 22:23) and laid prostrate (Deut 9:18; Psa 38:6). We should be careful that how we posture ourselves reflects what we are doing. "How" involves our **presence**, by representing what we anticipate and expect in words. (Psa 100:2; Isa 55:1; Hos 6:1; Matt 11:28) Presenting ourselves before the Lord with expectation at least informs our dress. How also includes our **fellowship**, how we relate to one another and those who are not one of us. (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Ptr 4:9) **The more worship is made about "me" the less it gives worth to "Thee". The more you make worship about "you", the less it is "true". Personal pronouns should be the most scarcely used words in gathered worship.**

TRANS So, WHY begin this way? The church at Corinth was dealing with a bunch of self-centered "me-s" that divided their fellowship, damaged unity and destroyed communion. And, we are as susceptible to the same propensities and tendencies in the church today. But, 1 Cor 11 shows us...

MPS: True worship demonstrates honor for Jesus by how each Christian regards self and respect for others.

We exist to give true worship, honor and glory, to Jesus. Nothing else should define our purpose or practice.

OBJ: Today, I offer four instructions so every Christian in the gathered body can honor Jesus in true worship.

READ 1 Cor 11:2

²Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.

#1. Jesus gets honored when we recognize there is a right way for Christians to relate. .2-16

Paul commends the Corinthians as they practice his instructions about proper worship. He wants them to understand that there is a right way to present themselves in worship. And, the way a person presents themselves to participate in worship honors Jesus. **All honor, glory and praise in Christian worship goes only to Jesus.**

I use the word "relate" to include three aspects, the way we regard ourselves, the way we present ourselves and the way we respect others. Our presence and participation influences and affects everyone else. No one should slip into Christian worship unnoticed. And, no Christian should expect that participation can in any way be in isolation. **Christians pay attention to how their presence influences others, to encourage all to honor Jesus.**

Paul wrote to people in a specific cultural context. This passage heavily reflects his desire for the people to demonstrate a faithful witness. This reminds us that the way we read and understand this passage should be regarded with much care.

Though everything is not immediately transferable, it is still applicable and holds important meaning for us. At first reading it seems easy to apply this to only one culture and people. One might ask, “Why does this even matter for us, if our culture is different?”

ILLUS How we present ourselves in worship demonstrates who gets honor.

I attended a worship service one time (actually more than once) where the stage was filled with massive screens, and the room was only lit by shadows. Smoke slowly billowed up all around the stage. Light slowly illuminated center stage where a person’s silhouette stood at a microphone, and this image cast onto every screen. Then he stated, “this is all about Jesus.” All I could think was, “that’s funny. The only person I can see is you.” HOW we honor is always a secondary matter to WHO, but it is never unimportant, neither for the leader nor for any participant. Clearly directed honor and glory is important, because when it’s not clear, it will go to who we desire to give it to.

READ 1 Cor 11:3

³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Paul begins by clarifying Biblical authority; “that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” (11:3) True worship begins with rightly placed, Biblical authority. Honor in worship is bestowed by the way authority is represented.

TRANS Paul builds his instruction on the foundation of Biblical authority to instruct in how and why it is represented in Christian worship.

First, Paul refers to **common practice** (tradition). **READ 1 Cor 11:4-7**

⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

Paul refers to the common practice, or tradition, among the churches that distinguished them in the world. This teaching is grounded in their understanding of a husband and wife’s relationship to one another. The way a wife wore her hair, and a head covering, in that day represented her marital status. A wife who wouldn’t cover her head made a statement about her husband and their marriage that was considered a disgrace.¹ Both husband and wife are the “glory” of another, and honor Jesus when they demonstrate this in marriage. This practice represented a tradition to honor Jesus in a cultural context.

Tradition is not always wrong, it’s just never ultimate. Tradition anchors us when properly regarded because it connects us to a larger narrative. Each generation today is too quick to throw off the “constraints” of the former generation to “correct all their ills”. Tradition can easily become a distraction, even an infection, when “we’ve always done it this way” defines the spirit of our motives. But tradition can also prove very helpful. Our application will not remain identical, even today across cultural boundaries, but obedience to Biblical teaching must remain faithful. Tradition that remains faithful to Biblical teaching links the narrative of the unchanging gospel to the ever-changing epochs of time, culture, and generation through a faithful demonstration that honors Jesus.

Second, Paul cites the **Biblical teaching on creation** (.8-12)

⁸For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

Paul builds from creation to establish man and woman’s interdependence. He uses three references. Creation’s order with

¹ D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1178.

man first reveals a purpose for gender distinction. And, creation's operation with man born of woman shows that they are interdependent upon one another. He also reminds us that Christians should rightly regard creation in worship because it is always present. Christians never ignore gender when we worship the One whom 'by', "through" and "for" all things were created, and in whom all things hold together. (Col 1:15-17) When Christians hold a right regard for creation in worship, headship and authority between husband and wife is balanced by interdependence.² [Christians honor Jesus in worship by regarding His creational design and purpose.](#)

APPL Men and women, and specifically husband and wife, are not independent to do as we please. How men and women appear in worship matters. Genesis makes clear that God created man male and female for a reason. We dishonor God when we disregard His design and purpose. God's creational design and purpose holds specific application for Christians in worship. No one has the freedom to disrupt the service by intentionally drawing attention to themselves through their appearance. Our appearance demonstrates how we regard ourselves and shows a gospel-motivated respect for others. [Christians should be careful to honor Jesus by properly regarding, never confusing, gender and role through appearance.](#)

Third, Paul refers to **common sense**. (.13-15)

¹³*Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.* Paul lastly appeals to common sense. [He proceeds carefully here because he's not crazy. He knows that any time you speak of a woman's hair, you must exercise utmost caution.] As a general rule men's hair is shorter, and women's longer. He's not making a value assessment of hairstyle, but referencing a general reality. There are norms of personal appearance that we accept in the world. Then, there are people who dress to go to Walmart.

Paul culminates his argument by applying this to both what they wore and why. Some of the women in Corinth were evidently dressing in ways that were distracting. They dressed like the cult temple prostitutes, advertising themselves as "available" when they were married. What they wore revealed their motives and attitudes, which reflected who they wanted to honor. Paul appeals to common sense that this should not be so.

ILLUS Young lady prayed at altar. When she bowed down, myself and another minister at the front had to side step in front of her to cover what was exposed from the lack of clothes covering her.

Modesty honors God's creational command without advertising the creation! The point is not that women should wear head coverings in worship. But the way we dress reveals much about how we regard and think of ourselves, and want others to think about us. Paul instructs Timothy, "*women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control.*" (1 Tim 2:9) [Modesty as a prevailing principle remains essential to honor Jesus.](#)

What we wear, and why, especially in worship, should honor to God in every way. Modesty represents oneself in a respectful and worthy manner. Immodesty always centers attention in the wrong place for the wrong reason. If "sexy" is our aim, immodesty will always be our game. When righteousness clothes / consumes our heart, modesty will adorn our dress. [Modesty honors Jesus by presenting ourselves publicly with respect for our bodies as His creation.](#)

Christians should remain vigilantly aware of their presence in gathered worship, and how it affects and influences others. Like Jesus, Christians submit to God's authority to bring Him glory. Jesus was stripped to a mere cloth and a crown of thorns in submission to the Father's authority, so he could receive the Crown as King of Kings and Lords of Lords from the Father. When Christians clothes their bodies to demonstrate God's authority, they testify to being clothed in a righteousness received from Jesus. [Christians honor Jesus in true worship when we relate to one another faithfully to show His authority over life.](#)³

² Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 264–265.

³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 504. "Paul's ultimate concern seems to be related to the manifestation of glory

#2. Jesus' honor is destroyed when divisions remain in the fellowship. .17-22

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this?

No, I will not. 1 Cor 11:17-22

Paul rebukes the Corinthians because their gatherings are divided. People are not giving consideration for one another, only to "certain others". Divisions are caused by the same values that distinguish one in the world. Paul says that the only good that can come from this is that those who are truly worshiping Jesus can be distinguished from among the divided crowd, because they don't allow the divisions to remain. They've allowed divisions to penetrate the holiest of their observances, the Lord's Supper. They selfishly proceed without consideration for others, eating all the food, drinking all the wine, even to excess in drunkenness. Jesus is both dishonored, and more importantly, despised when selfishness and worldly values are allowed to remain in the congregation.

When we claim that Jesus redeems us and changes our values but continue to act in the same way, we destroy Jesus' honor and damage our fellowship by divisions created from worldly values and honor. No matter how well you perform religious exercises nor participate in the right activities, when we make the church about me we are always the access point for the world to gain entry. **Divisions always arise when people allow the world to access the church through their participation, rather than intentionally living as the church in the world. Jesus cannot be honored in true worship when divisions remain among Christian fellowship.**

TRANS Our worship around the meal we receive to remember Jesus should reflect what Jesus has done for us.

#3. Honoring Jesus begins with the meal that unites our fellowship. .23-26

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Cor 11:23-26

Paul teaches on the Christian observance of the Lord's Supper. He focuses the observance on its meaning for each person. Jesus instituted the observance as a way to teach, remember and observe his sacrifice through our participation. God is thanked for His provision. Jesus' body was broken and his blood shed for us. The meal is more than only a symbol. The Lord' Supper is a remembrance through observance, a participation by faith of God's salvation for us in Jesus Christ; our death that we did not because we could not die, our cleansing that we received without our blood being shed.

God gave the Israelites the Passover to remember his salvation. Jesus gave his followers a new observance to remember his new salvation. **Christian fellowship centers on our remembrance of Jesus through the observance of the meal that unites us. Jesus is honored when his sacrifice for us, remembered by observing the Lord's Supper, centers our fellowship.**

#4. Jesus is honored when we remember his sacrifice by our participation in the gospel. .27-34

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak

and shame in worship, particularly that all be done to the glory of God (cf. 10:31), and not to glorify or shame anyone else. Humanly directed glory is to be avoided, as well as humanly or divinely directed shame."

*and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— ³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come. **1 Cor 11:27-34***

When we partake in the Lord's Supper in a manner with little or no consideration for what it means, we dishonor Jesus. This is the meal that unites us with Jesus because it identifies us as His. The manner in which we approach and receive this meal defines all that we are as Christians. You may choke it down with little thought, but that only brings greater condemnation. You can only consume this meal by faith through serious reflection, deep self-examination, and true repentance. [The Lord's Supper is the meal satisfies the eternal hunger and nourishment of our souls.](#)

The manner in which a Christian approaches the Lord's Table reveals not only what the meal, but also what Jesus means to them. Preparing to partake in the Lord's Table demonstrates a serious focus on one's soul through personal examination.

The first act of personal examination begins with a serious concern for the church's united fellowship. Division that comes to the Table denies Jesus' work to atone for and redeem sin that the sacrifice of the Table represents. In other words, when we allow divisions in the fellowship to remain we tell God, "It's okay for me to sin against you, but I cannot forgive others who offend me. I will accept my reconciliation to you, but I will do nothing to reconcile myself to others." We recognize that unconfessed sin and broken relationships damage and divide the fellowship. [When Holy Spirit reveals division, by faith in Jesus we pursue the other person\(s\) to seek reconciliation.](#)

The second act to prepare for the Lord's Table applies the truth of God's Word to our personal life. When and where we do not measure up to His truth, we repent. We invite Holy Spirit to search and try us, to expose any unbelief or way in us that is not pleasing to God.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

*And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! **Psa 139:23-24***

When we participate at a personal level in the saving work that Jesus accomplished at his eternal level, we demonstrate faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice. We let the Word of God speak and receive its judgment ON us IN our sin, that we might also receive the good news of Jesus FOR our sin. We receive God's loving discipline that corrects us from the sin in our life, to walk in righteousness. [When we take seriously the atonement Jesus gives by faith, we judge ourselves and our sin with God's truth, entering into Jesus' death, in the confident, sure hope of God's promise that we too will be raised with Christ by God to new life.](#)

The third act to prepare for the Lord's Table strives to participate together. We *wait for one another* in the confident hope and multiplied joy that Jesus is working out salvation in us together. [Jesus receives honor when our remembrance of His sacrifice observes His full atoning work through personal forgiveness, cleansing and righteousness, as well as unity in fellowship among brothers and sister in Christ. True worship honors Jesus when we regard self and respect others by cultivating gospel application among our fellowship.](#)

CLOSE

TRANS ...lead into Lord's Supper