

Lesson 16 Lecture

Equipped for Worship – 1 Corinthians 11:2-12:31

Greetings! I see we're one day away from one of Hallmark's and the floral industry's favorite days of the year. Don't get me wrong, it's never a bad thing to remind us to tell the special people in our lives we love them. Sometimes, though, we use Valentine's Day to manipulate a situation. There's the story of the student whose high-school English teacher was well known for being a fair, but hard, grader. One day the student received a B minus on a theme paper. In hopes of bettering his grade and in the spirit of the Valentine season, he sent her an extravagant heart-shaped box of chocolates with the pre-printed inscription: "BE MINE." The following day, he received in return a Valentine from the teacher. It read: Thank you, but it's still 'BE MINE-US.'

Well, I'm guessing the first part of chapter 11 might have stirred the pot for some of you ladies. This section of Scripture has been sadly abused by many Christian men over the centuries. Men, as they are prone to do when it comes to reading instructions, conveniently skip over the first component of the chain of command Paul outlines in these verses. Verse 3 begins with, "*But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ,*". Let's stop there. Everything begins with Christ. The term "head" means the one providing direction or having authority. Christ is not only the head of the overall church, but also, He is the head of the Christian man. What does that look like?

Ephesians 5:25 & 28a provides the picture, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.*" Christian men are to love their wives in the same manner that Christ loved, and loves, the church. How did/does Jesus show His love for the church? First and foremost, He laid down His life for the church. The church would not exist had Jesus not willingly submit Himself to the

Father's will and be a sacrifice and atonement for each and all of our sins. The entirety of His ministry was never focused on Himself – it was focused on His Father. From John 8:29, Jesus said He always does those things that please the Father. As head of the church, Jesus loves it sacrificially, faithfully, devotedly, passionately, encouragingly, and protectively.

Ladies, let me ask you something, does that sound appealing in a man? Would you be more willing to be submissive to a man's headship if he was living in the manner Christ loves the church? There's the story of the husband and wife who are at the doctor's office. The husband has not been feeling well and has undergone a battery of tests. They're there to get the results. They're both sitting in the lobby when the doctor asks to speak just with the wife. She glances at her husband, stands up, and anxiously follows the doctor into his office. He motions for her to sit down.

The doctor says, "I'm afraid your husband's condition is very serious."

The woman starts to tear up and asks the doctor if there's anything she can do.

"Well, if you make every meal with special care using only hard-to-find organic ingredients, keep the house completely clean, keep him comfortable at all times, be patient with his complaining, and basically do whatever he asks, he *may* have a chance."

The woman, with tears in her eyes, looks at the doctor and says, "I understand." She gets up, shakes the doctor's hand, and walks out to the lobby where her husband is waiting for her.

He looks at her and asks, "What did the doctor say?"

She looked at him lovingly and said, "You're going to die."

The advent of the women's liberation movement has been an empowering force for the last 50-60 years, but it was not the first one. No one in history did more for women in terms of acknowledging them as equally valuable members of humanity than Jesus Christ. He spoke to women when the custom was, they were not worthy to be spoken to. The first evangelists were women – who were the ones that discovered the empty tomb? Typically, a movement is an extreme position to demonstrate the perceived wrongness of the current status quo. Therefore, words like the next component of verse 3 are difficult to process in an era of women's liberation, "*and the head of the woman is man,*" When saying "woman", the reference here is specifically to a wife – not all women in general.

Genesis 2:18 offers God's original plan for the woman's role, "*And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*" The woman in a married role is to be a helper to her husband, but she is not to be a slave. Some men conveniently skip over the "*comparable*" component of a woman's value and role in a relationship. Men and women not only need to understand the hierarchy of authority in a love relationship, but also they need to comprehend the potential fruit of it *if* each wrung of the hierarchy is performing as it should.

- The head of Christ is God
- The head of man is Christ
- The head of woman is man

There has never been nor will there be breakdown of the relationship between God the Son and God the Father. However, in a chain of command, whenever the link above you breaks, those below that link suffer. This is a big ask, ladies, but part of your role in a marriage is to lovingly encourage a man to learn what it means to live a life under the headship of Jesus Christ. A significant component of

that encouragement is being a model of the character of God – one who is loving, forgiving, merciful, and as many other components of God’s character as He will give you via the Holy Spirit. This is a huge request when your husband is not living in a manner of true submission to Christ. I am forever thankful I married a woman who has stood by my side and shown me the character of Christ so many times when she easily and rightfully could have told me to pound sand.

To help understand verses 4-15, which deal with covering the head and the length of hair, getting a little historical context might make this section a little more palatable and relevant. The Corinthian women were no doubt “feeling it” with their newfound liberty in Christ. It was customary at this time in history for women to cover their heads in public – except women of immoral character. You may remember in my lecture a few weeks ago there was in Corinth Aphrodite’s temple that housed some 1,000 prostitutes. These women shaved their heads and left them uncovered. Therefore, Paul’s underlying issue with the covering the head and the length of hair was the image they were projecting to general society. Paul’s main point on this was women should not be a stumbling block via their appearance.

I have been to worship services where the women who are up on the stage might as well have been in a burlesque show. They may be up there worshipping God, but they are intentionally dressed in a manner to draw attention to themselves as opposed to having the attention on worshipping God. Yes, we have liberty in Christ, but not all liberty is profitable. Moreover, a component of that liberty is the freedom to not act or dress in a manner that society’s pressures impose. Whether women or men, as believers, our primary focus is to bring honor to Jesus – not ourselves.

Verse 7 says, “*A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.*” I like what Jon Courson said about

this verse, “*The woman is the glory – or literally, the outshining, the reflection – of the man. Husband, if you think your wife is out to lunch or off the wall, if you’re disappointed in her, tired of her, down on her, or mad at her – guess what. She is simply a reflection of you.*”

In verse ten, we read about a seemingly strange relationship – that a woman ought to cover her head because of the angels. Why would the angels have an issue on whether or not a woman covers her head? Angels are hypersensitive to things being done in order. They saw one-third of their company cast out of heaven after one of them said, “*I want to do my own thing. I want to be like God.*” - from Isaiah 14:14. By complying with the order of being submissive to their husband via covering their heads while praying and prophesying, the wives were not stumbling blocks to the angels.

I like being on a team. My favorite team is my marriage. Verses 11 and 12 outline the team concept in a marriage that is in the Lord. A woman is not independent of a man, nor is a man independent of a woman. A woman came from a man (via Adam’s rib), and a man came from a woman via childbirth. Again, I like what Jon Courson says about the marriage relationship. We’re not to be **competers against** each other, we’re to be **completers of** each other. In Jackson Brown’s great song, “*Tender is the Night*”, he has a profound statement regarding a relationship. “*You win; I win; we lose.*” The captain of the marriage team that is in the Lord is God, and as long as the team is playing according to God’s rules, the team is going to be successful.

Moving into the second half of chapter 11, Paul addresses the issue of abuses in the handling of the Lord’s Supper – also known as Communion. In the early days of the church, the members would have something called an agape, or love feast. Today we call them pot lucks. These were often financed by the wealthier believers. These feasts were typically held before the Lord’s Supper. Tragically,

the feasts dissolved into drunken parties, and they bled into the administration of the Lord's Supper. Things had gotten so out of hand that it led Paul to say in verses 20-21, “*So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.*” As a result of their perverting the spirit of the Lord's Supper, there was division in the fellowship.

J. Vernon McGee calls the Lord's Supper, “*The highest expression and the holiest exercise of Christian worship.*” Dr. McGee also notes that there is no place in Scripture that commands us to remember Jesus' birthday, but we are requested to remember His death day. In verse 23, Paul receives the revelation of the details of the last supper. He wasn't there, so Jesus must have personally enlightened him of the details of that night. I still marvel in Paul's recounting of the story because as Jesus was facing his mockery of a trial, scourging, and crucifixion, He began the supper by giving thanks. There is great power in a spirit of gratitude to God in the face of adversity.

There are two elements to the Lord's Supper – the bread and the wine. The bread is symbolic of the physical body of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in one of His seven “*I am*” statements in John's Gospel that He was the “*bread of life*”. (John 6:35) We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that Jesus broke the bread. This was symbolic of what His body was about to be subjected to as a component of His atoning sacrifice. You may have heard the term “breaking bread” – this is often a saying used to link something to be shared. Jesus wants to share with all of humanity the sacrifice He made, so that all might be saved. As we eat of the bread, we're to do this in remembrance of Christ and what He did for us at the cross.

In verse 25, He moved onto the second component of the Lord's Supper, “*In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*” The cup was the

new covenant. The old covenant was using the blood of sacrificed animals to cover sins. The new covenant was the blood of the Lamb of God to wash and take away our sins once and for all. Regarding what's in the cup when we participate in the Lord's Supper, there are varying opinions. First of all, the notion that Jesus served alcoholic wine at the Last Supper is silly. This was the Passover, so they were using unleavened bread. Does it make any sense that He would use a fermented, or alcohol-based, wine vs. unfermented? Our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters believe in transubstantiation. Shockingly, that word is worth only 18 points in Scrabble – unless you get a double or triple score! This means that when the priest officiates at the altar, the bread actually becomes the body of Christ, and the juice becomes the actual blood of Jesus. If this were true, it would be cannibalism.

The prevailing opinion these days is the elements are merely symbols. I like what J. Vernon McGee called them – they are components of Christ's revelation of Himself to the believer. The broken bread and the poured-out wine was/is Christ revealing to a sin-shackled world that God so loved them that He gave His only Son to be Himself the sacrifice to make a way to be saved from the eternal enslavement and penalty of sin. When taking Communion, we're to consider Christ's presence in our past, in our present time, and in the future as we see in verse 26 when He promises He will come again.

In verses 27-30, Paul speaks to the consequences of an abuse of the Lord's Supper. The consequences include:

- Sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (vs. 27)
- Brings judgment on themselves (vs. 29)
- Brings weakness, sickness, and death (vs. 30)

How should we prepare ourselves in advance of Communion? Verse 28 provides the answer, "*Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the*

bread and drink from the cup.” If you’re about to partake in the Lord’s Supper, you need to spend some time asking God to reveal anything in your life that needs cleansing, healing, and forgiveness. The purpose of Christ crucified and resurrection is to provide those who believe in His atoning sacrifice a way to be reconciled peacefully with God – to declare their sins and celebrate the truth that they are forgiven because of what Jesus did. In verse 28, Paul once again emphasizes the important fruit of the Lord’s Supper – unity – they should all eat together united in gratitude.

When living in the Spirit, we are living for God, and we are living as God would want us to reflect Himself. The Holy Trinity is the perfect example of unity. There are no disagreements within the three-way relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Each member of the Trinity glorifies each other and out of that selfless mentality, the Godhead is glorified. Since we are created as a lesser trinity in God’s image and as followers of Christ, we are to be living examples of God. One of the centerpieces of that example is living in unity with each other. Given the selfish demands of our flesh, how are we supposed to do this? Thankfully, God has an answer. He must impart, or give, to us **Himself** to overwhelm the temptation to live victoriously over the demands of our flesh.

As we get into chapter 12, Paul moves on from the corrective component of this letter and gets into a new section of this letter where he is going to show us an important way to live in unity. In the NIV bible, the heading at the top of Chapter 12 is “Concerning Spiritual Gifts”. In the NKJV bible, the heading is “Spiritual Gifts – Unity in Diversity”. Via the Holy Spirit, God provides gifts, or the better translation is “spirituals” or “spiritualities” to each believer. This is one of the many wonderful purposes of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His primary purpose is to testify to the truth of Who Jesus is, but He is so much more. He is a teacher. He is a helper. He is a comforter. He is a provider. He is a friend. His

thoughts towards you are countless and all rooted in His love and affection for you. Yet, while He does all these things for you, He has a bigger agenda – how these things that He does for you fits into a unified Body of Christ. That is the mindset Paul has as he lays out the gifts of the Spirit in Chapter 12 (there is an additional list in Romans 12).

He begins the chapter with a desire for the church to not be uninformed. If that is his desire, then he must be under the impression they are uninformed. Sadly, much of the church today is not fully, or biblically, informed of the topic of the gifts of the Spirit. The Pentecostal and Charismatic components of the church place a heavy emphasis on exercising the gifts of the Spirit. However, their exercising of these gifts is often either unbiblical or used in a carnal manner to drive an emotional experience to attract and keep members. They're relentlessly seeking signs and wonders to validate God's presence. I've actually been told that if you're not speaking in tongues, you're not really saved. When I ask for where it says that in the bible, I don't get an answer.

On the other end of the spectrum, you have the John MacArthurs taking the position that many of the gifts of the Spirit were only available during the early church to demonstrate the authority solely given to the apostles. When the apostles died, these gifts were no longer available. There is nothing in the bible that specifically testifies to this position. Please know I have great respect for John MacArthur – I have his commentary in my library. However, I just wish he would take all the energy he spends beating up the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches over their uses of the gifts and redirect that powerful knowledge he has towards preaching the Gospel to the unsaved.

The point of chapter 12 is, as I mentioned earlier, to show that each of these gifts has two purposes: 1) to demonstrate a component of God's power; and, 2) use them as how each believer has an important role in the functioning of the Body of

Christ. Paul opens his comments with the statement that prior to their salvation, the Corinthians were influenced by mute idol worship. He echoes the futility of idols that was mentioned in Psalm 135:16-17, “*They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; nor is there any breath in their mouths.*”

In verse 3, Paul makes a bold statement, “*Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*” When speaking to what we believe, there are some things we simply can’t say with conviction without the help of the Holy Spirit. If you recall when Jesus asked the disciples whom they thought He was, Peter said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” What was Jesus’ response to this proclamation in Matthew 16:17? “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*” Remember what Paul said earlier in this letter in 2:14, “*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” Without the Holy Spirit, we are in such darkness of deceit and lies, we can neither know the truth of God, nor see His light.

As was noted in question 13, verses 4-7, Paul provides an important outline for the management of the gifts of the Spirit – Who distributes them and for what purpose they serve.

- There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit (vs. 4)
- There are different kinds of service (or ministries) but the same Lord (vs. 5)
- There are different kinds of working but the same God (vs. 6) The Greek word for working is *energma*, from which we get “energize”.

The gifts are linked to the Spirit, the ministries are linked to the Son, and the workings, or operations, are energized by the Father. I hope this chart puts some

framework for the gifts of the Spirit, the power they provide, and what ministries they are available for. The important point is their purpose, and Paul reminds us of this in verse 7 – they are given to glorify God and for the common good. They are not meant to bring attention to ourselves or be used to satisfy the selfish demands of our flesh.

Given the short time I have, I'm going to provide a quick synopsis of each gift.

Wisdom – a supernatural answer to a question or to solve a problem. A good example of this would be when two women brought a child before King Solomon – both claiming to be the child's mother. Solomon suggested he cut the child in two for it to be shared by both of them – the real mother was revealed as she didn't want to see her child cut in two. Wisdom? – Yes! Twisted wisdom? – Absolutely!

Word of Knowledge – a supernatural insight to another person's life. An example of this is when Jesus knew the woman at the well had 5 husbands and was not married to the man she was living with at that time.

Faith – all believers are given a measure of faith. This is a supernatural conviction to step out and do something you would never have done otherwise.

Miracles – this is a supernatural power to defy conventional understanding of scientific truths. Scripturally, these typically show up for non-believers, but that does not mean they are not available for the believer.

Prophecy – this is the Divine ability to forth-tell God's heart. Prophetic words are for edification, exhortation, or comfort delivered when they're most needed by someone who needs to hear from God.

Discerning of Spirits – this is the supernatural ability to recognize a spiritual moment – be it good or evil. I mentioned earlier an example of this when Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ.

Tongues and their interpretation – these are covered in more detail in Chapter 14.

The remainder of Chapter 12 once again emphasizes seriousness of the Body of Christ be in unity – even though there is a welcomed and God-determined diversity. The unifying “glue” for lack of better words is the truth of Who Jesus is as testified to us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul notes the fruit of that baptism in verse 13, “*so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*” Paul uses the human body as a metaphor. There are multiple components of a human body – each serving their own purpose. When one part of the body isn’t working properly, this impacts the rest of the body.

One of the enemy’s more effective weapons is to discourage believers to think they don’t have anything to offer to the Body of Christ. That is a complete lie. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have at least one, and possibly more, gifts and purposes within the Body of Christ. This is a major reason why God created you! What does Paul say in verse 18? “*But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*” We all need each other. For reasons only God knows, He gave me, a goofball, the ability to teach. However, there are countless things I have zero talent for. When I think about all the work that goes into putting together this Bible study, I’m so thankful there are so many of you who do what you do that has made this study so successful for 40 years. Without all of us working together, I’m convinced this ministry would have shriveled up and died a long time ago.

I especially love what Paul says in verses 22-25 because he demonstrates God’s heart on those who think they don’t offer as much to the Kingdom as others. I can do no better justice to these words other than to just read them. “*On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the*

parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.” Do you hear God’s heart in these words? Each and every one of you, regardless of your perception of the value you think you bring to the Kingdom and the Body of Christ, is greatly honored by God. We are all in this together. We rejoice together. We suffer together. If each of us opts to seek to live in the Spirit, then we have the hope of living together in unity with a peace that pass all understanding. Nothing in this world can come close to offering the joy and the power of a united Body of Christ – living for each other, serving each other, and loving each other.

At the end of Chapter 12, Paul notes all of these gifts are good, but there is a most excellent way – there’s the ultimate gift of God. You’re going to have to wait until next week for Carol to learn what that is. But I’ll give you a hint. Have a Happy Valentine’s Day! Let’s pray.