

“Body Unity and the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly” –  
Issues of Ministry

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 Date: July 2, 2006  
 Title: Proper Etiquette for Men and Women in Local Church Worship  
 Text: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16  
 Theme: Proper Etiquette for Men and Women in the Worship of God Reflect the Economical Order within the Godhead itself.

You and I live in a day and age where authority is rejected and submission to it dismissed. Yet in failing to be responsible in the exercising of authority and our submission to it, governments, homes, and churches fail.

In Matthew 12:24 and following Jesus speaks of kingdoms, cities, and homes divided against themselves (v. 25). Such places in the absence of responsible authority and voluntary submission are laid waste and they will not stand. He concludes with the statement, “He who is not with me is against me” (v. 30).

If the powers that exist are in conflict then governments, homes, and churches will be laid waste and will not stand. In the church of Corinth there was an element of confusion as it related to proper etiquette in the context of local church worship. Paul’s response to the situation was to set forth the biblical pattern for responsible authority and voluntary submission. In the absence of these two elements chaos will reign.

**What eternal significance does this study have?**

In the absence of this eternal truth chaos would reign. Paul provides for us a glimpse into the inner workings of the Trinity. As equals in authority and essence how do they function? The answer is found in a mutual submission of each part to the whole. Inside the Godhead the Son submits to the Father and the Holy Spirit is in submission to the Father and the Son.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

In the work place each individual employed is of equal value in their humanity, but each one functions differently based on their position within the facility. Inside of the facility there are various levels of administration. Communication and activity flows through certain channels. These various levels of administration do not create worth in the individual as to their natural value. We might assign value to the activity, but the person (regardless as to function) has equal value with all the other people.

This is no less true with God. Each one in their essence is equal, but in their function or placement in the divine structure of administration they are different. This structuring was internally decided and voluntarily submitted to.

It has nothing to do with inferiority or superiority. It has everything to do with function. It is this idea that provides a basis for how we are to function as a government, as a church and in the home.

"The very essence of the Godhead, that God is one God eternally existing in three Persons, who are joyfully and eternally united in a holy fellowship, could never have been apprehended apart from this great work. Theologians like to distinguish between the ontological Trinity and the economical Trinity. The ontological Trinity refers to who God is in his essential being; the economical Trinity refers to how this essential nature works itself out in the mighty acts of God."

[http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/04/a\\_meditation\\_for\\_good\\_friday.php](http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/04/a_meditation_for_good_friday.php)

### **What immediate significance does this study have?**

In the absence of this immediate truth chaos would reign. In the absence of responsible authority and voluntary submission you have complete anarchy. And in the presence of anarchy each one does what is right in their eyes. This is true in government, in the work place, in the local church, and in the home. Paul's argument for proper etiquette in local church worship is built on the functioning structure of the Godhead. If we do not cheerfully and willingly submit to the divinely placed and God given authorities in our life, anarchy will reign.

As we consider the passage, we cannot afford to be sidetracked by the illustration that the apostle uses to unveil the larger picture. The issue is one of submission and function and structure as it relates to worship in the context of the local church.

### **What are the dangers confronting us in our historical and cultural setting?**

We live in America. We are self-made and fiercely independent and it is this underlying attitude that will destroy a government, a local church, and a home. Our current historical and cultural context has lost a real sense of community and connectivity. We refuse to be told what to do. Our independence has made us rebellious and obstinate. If we fail to understand the structure of God in the outworking of His purpose, we will find ourselves in a position of rebellion against God as He is working in and through the structure.

Introduction:

The exercising of a believer's freedom in Christ is for the purpose of glorifying God, edifying man, and testifying of Christ (10:31-11:1). Those same principles come into play as it relates to corporate worship. The Corinthian fellowship sought to follow the instruction laid out for them by the apostle Paul and for this reason he commends them for their effort (v. 2). The fellowship, although contending with problems that would be common to any relationship, still sought to pursue the person of Christ and the expression of His activity in their midst. Such a statement on Paul's part "hints that the church has not

departed significantly from the substance of what he has previously taught.” (James A. Davis, “1-2 Corinthians,” Baker Commentary on the Bible, 976).

The first thing to note about this passage is that it is an “approving” passage (“Now I praise you” etc. v. 2); whereas the next section beginning at verse 17 is a “disapproving” section (“I praise you not” etc.).

William J. Martin, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation,” W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.231-241. [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/corinthians\\_martin.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/corinthians_martin.pdf)

The issue in our present study concerns what constitutes proper etiquette inside the church gathered. How are we to conduct ourselves in the communication of information and why is this etiquette proper?

Paul lays down an initial premise that forms the foundation for what is to follow.

“The passage (11:2-16) occurs within a framework of a discussion on the significance and observance of the Lord's Supper and its place as the central theme in the act of worship.”

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Notice the overriding truth set forth by Paul in verse 3.

#### I. The foundation for Paul's principle (v. 3)

In verse 3 Paul lays out a theology of headship. *“It is the keystone verse of the passage.”*

Paul is dealing with economy or administration or function or structure.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Economy or structure concerns the relationship of objects to one another. Economy or structure seeks to answer the question of how equals work together with a common procedure and toward a common goal.

He is not dealing with equality of being or worth or value. Notice what Paul does say, “God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman.” He is not saying God the Father has greater value or worth than Christ or that man has greater value or worth than woman.

This passage focuses on what is proper for both the man and the woman when it comes to one's conduct within the gathered church. This emphasis is an expression or consequence of a fundamental truth that is laid out for the audience in verse 3. After his initial statement of praise in verse 2, verse 3

gives the primary thrust of the paragraph, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” The passage is dealing with one’s position within the economy or outworking of God as it expresses itself in corporate worship.

“His purpose here is not to teach the principles of public prayer and edifying instruction, or to enunciate the rules for their practice, but to deal with the significance of the Headship of Christ, and only what is relevant to this theme would be in place here.”

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He uses the word “head” and “it seems to express two things: subordination and origination.” (David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” BKC, 528). “The second has the advantage of according greater continuity to the section as a whole (vv. 8-11).” (James A. Davis, “1-2 Corinthians,” Baker Commentary on the Bible, 976).

“There is no good reason to doubt that when he says, ‘the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God,’ he is using the word κεφαλη in the well-attested metaphorical sense of ‘authority.’ The verses which follow show plainly enough that questions of authority are his main concern, and this becomes especially clear in verse 10, where it is explained that the head covering represents ἐξουσίαν ‘authority.’ In verse 3, he uses the word κεφαλη in this metaphorical way instead of κυριος (lord) or αρχων (ruler) for two reasons: he has in view the symbolical explanation of the head covering which he is going to offer in the passage, and so he uses the word for ‘head’ here as a metaphor that lends itself to that purpose; and he wants to suggest that the authority of which he speaks is not an authority arbitrarily imposed upon someone, but the kind of authority which naturally belongs to a ‘head’ that is in organic *unity* with its ‘body.’

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By violating proper etiquette the individual is dishonoring the authority above them.

Here he states the general thesis which governs the entire discussion that follows. He indicates that there is a divinely ordained hierarchy, in which men are directly under Christ as their “head” while women are under the headship of man. Christ is directly under the head of God the Father in this grand scheme of things. <http://www.bible-researcher.com/headcoverings.html>

#### APPLICATION:

Let us use parenting as an illustration of this idea. My children are made in the image and likeness of God. They are just like my wife and I, but my children structurally are not my equals. When they were in my home under my authority, they took direction from me. I did not treat them as functional

equals. As a parent I might listen and accept their communication, but they are to submit under my headship. If I do not have this structural distinction, I will have chaos in the home. This is no less true in life.

Are you recognizing the divinely establish authorities in your life?

- Government           Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2:17
- Employer             Eph. 6; 1 Pet. 2:18
- Husbands             1 Pet. 3:1; Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22
- Parents               Eph. 6
- Local Ch. Elders   Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17

Do you recognize where you are in your responsibility as an authority and as one who is in submission to authority?

How we respond to that authority can be greatly affected by how authority exercises its divine responsibilities.

ILLUSTRATION:

Aesop's Fable - The North Wind and the Sun

The North Wind and the Sun disputed as to which was the most powerful, and agreed that he should be declared the victor who could first strip a wayfaring man of his clothes.

The North Wind first tried his power and blew with all his might, but the keener his blasts, the closer the Traveler wrapped his cloak around him, until at last, resigning all hope of victory, the Wind called upon the Sun to see what he could do.

The Sun suddenly shone out with all his warmth. The Traveler no sooner felt his warm rays than he took off one garment after another, and at last, fairly overcome with heat, undressed and bathed in a stream that lay in his path.

No matter who we are there is a sense in which we are exercising authority over someone or something. Older siblings have authority over younger siblings. The last born has authority over the family pets. In the exercising of our authority let us be like the sun and bath those inside of circle with the warmth of grace.

Paul then provides an illustration of this principle in church life . . . next week.