

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

“...there be divisions among you...”

There will always be divisions within local churches and between local churches. Paul says these *must* arise, to show who is commendable in the congregation. When a heresy makes itself known in a local church or in churches in general, God will raise up men to combat it. (If He does not, it means the local church is dead).

What happens is that the one raised up is torn in his conscience and has no option but to stand up and be counted. He will oppose the heresy with all his might, no matter what, and will thus prove himself to the people. He becomes the modern equivalent of David the Giant Slayer, horrified by the blatant nature of the heresy and wanting to get rid of it before it harms the people of God.

David's brothers were angered by David's open charge of cowardice against the Israelites, who simply stood back and allowed Goliath to challenge them day after day. They were angered when he said he, a lowly shepherd, would kill the giant and save the people. Despite their anger and scorn, he did what he set out to do and so became the champion of all Israel. We need men today who will stand without flinching against the enemies of God!

However, to those who would stand in the shoes of the champion of God, I would give a warning. Though the true champion of God, and chosen by Him to be the next king, David's favoured place in the congregation was overtaken by Saul's delusions and bitterness. His bitterness was caused directly by a demon sent by God to harass him, and Saul took out his anger on David.

This always happens to those who are champions for God. They are thanked at first, but are then scorned and harassed as time goes on. This is because he takes his office seriously and others soon forget the nature of the champion's work! As soon as peace appears to emerge, they start to dislike the champion, thinking he is no longer required. They forget that it was at just such a juncture of peace that David fell into sin!

People begin to hate the man who stands firm at all times. They see him as some kind of Neolithic cave-man, not suited to the modern world! They loathe his readiness to do battle and so shun him if they can. He will become a disliked champion, even by those who ought to know

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

better...including Christians who have no stomach for spiritual truths.

There is a place for God's champions today, but they must think of the consequences and the disruption caused to their lives. They must not imagine that they will be loved by the people of God, or given plaudits of praise. Indeed, if they wish to receive praise, they are not champions of God anyway! No, champions are alone in their task. Like David they will challenge sin as individuals. They will stride out armed only with God's word, grace and mercy, and with little or no backing from their fellows.

The champion will achieve the goal given to him by God, but this will not give him stature before the people, who come to resent the one who wins. They are resentful because they stood back whilst one man went to the fore and won the battle on their behalf, thus illuminating their own failures. They see in him what they ought to see in their own souls. Thus, the scorn of the people is a reflection of their own failure to perform as Believers.

In this chapter, Paul praises the Corinthians for keeping his various teachings alive. Yet, as before, he also rebukes them for a variety of problems they have not addressed properly. Included is the way we ought to hold the Lord's Supper, and the manner of dress of women. By rebuking them, Paul opens himself up to rejection and scorn, but as a true champion of God he rebukes them anyway, regardless of consequences. This is because he feared God more than he feared men; men whom he did fear at times.

Some of Paul's words in this chapter have led others, scorers, to say that Paul demanded a following for himself. This is not true as the text itself proves. No champion of God will ever try to gain his own following. His efforts are pointed away from himself and toward God – and this is what Paul readily does in this chapter, as he does throughout his teaching.

Verses 1-3

1.

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

2.

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

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

3.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

Paul calls on the Corinthians to be ‘followers’ of him. This is not meant in the way we would nowadays take it. He is actually saying “Be mimics (mimeomai – the root of mimites, ‘imitator’) of me, just as I mimic Christ”. Paul is asking them to imitate his own imitating of Christ. He is telling them they did not know Christ physically, so they ought to do what Paul does, because *h e* was taught by Christ, and to imitate him is to imitate Christ.

There is no way Paul would demand a following for himself and his own merits, because such would oppose his entire ministry and expressed statements. He praises the Corinthians for remembering what he had said and for the ‘ordinances’ he gave them. These are paradosis or traditions. This is not meant in a bad sense (e.g. tradition versus truth) but in a good sense. Christians ought not fear or despise true tradition. Communion is a tradition in this sense, as is meeting together, etc. Paradosis is simply the way a teaching is expanded or taught. It is how the things of Christ are ‘delivered’ – paradidomi, the root of paradosis.

Verse 3 tells us Paul was not, after all, demanding his own following, for he says ‘But...I would have you know’ who is the true leader of men. That is, *thelo* – I desire you / it is my intention that, you should know that the head, *kephale*, of every man is Christ; Christ is ‘head’ or supreme chief, master, lord, husband of the Church, the corner stone.

Modern women like to think that ‘man’ in this text is as it usually is – meaning all people, as in ‘mankind’. But, it does not. The word for ‘man’ in this text is *aner*, so it cannot possibly mean ‘mankind (e.g. including women)’. If this were so, Paul might have used *hekastos*, ‘everyone’, or the even better word, *anthropos*, meaning ‘human being – male or female’. Instead, he uses a very specific word that can only mean ‘male’.

In this context, then, Paul is saying something important to all women today – that the immediate master of all males is Christ. Women are not included in this statement, as the

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

following statement proves. Paul then says that the 'head' or master of the woman (is) the man. 'Woman' is *gune* and it literally means a woman of any age or marital status. It can also specifically mean a wife. Therefore, Paul is making a very clear definition and difference. He is saying that a male is directly under the headship of Christ, whereas a woman (whether a wife or any other female) is firstly under the headship of males. Thus, the male must ensure that he is acting as of Christ.

The Lord of Christ is said to be 'God', *theos*, or the supreme deity (i.e. the Trinity). Christ is God, but here it means all three persons of the Trinity acting as One. It is not just another word for 'Father'. It refers to the Trinity as one complete 'God'.

This interpretation will not be liked by many women (especially feminists), who have come to see themselves as autonomous nowadays. Many live alone and single and think they may do without men, who they certainly do not see as their 'masters'. Yet, this is exactly what Paul is saying. He is referring to the order of creation. Man was made in God's image and woman was made from man's body. Men should note that though this order does not include worthiness or not, Christian men ought to be *worthy* of the position of 'master'.

The Corinthians were *not* told they were masters of women in their own right. He told them they were under the lordship of God, implying that their words and actions must reflect holiness and the love of God. As head over the woman, a man must be godly and protect the woman he is head of.

The text also infers that all women are under the headship of all men in all things. In scripture we see that some women had their own businesses. This is fine. We have even known female rulers of nations. Paul is not necessarily talking of these peripheral things. He is talking mainly of spiritual things. That is why he says that women who need tuition in scripture should speak with their husbands/men (which warns them to gain knowledge). In other matters, whether business or politics, women should still consider themselves to be under the headship of men, who should provide spiritual guidance in all things, including business, leisure, politics, and so on.

Verses 4-10

1.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

2.

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

3.

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

4.

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man,

5.

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

6.

Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

7.

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.”

Paul expands his argument. Or, possibly, the previous argument was used to lay the foundation for a query about headcoverings. He says it is wrong for a man to pray or to prophesy with his head covered. Now we should not take this to necessarily mean, in this text, that Paul is referring to public prayer only or prophecy. It *might* include this meaning, but it is not made explicit. Rather, we may say that when a man prays or prophesies in any situation, his head should be uncovered. (This is interesting, when one considers that Jews cover their heads).

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

Covering the head is a sign of servitude to another. Males may not cover their heads when praying or prophesying because they are made in God's express image (and are head of the woman) and no-one should sublimate that image or glory with a covering.

But, women are subject to men, and so they ought to cover their heads as a sign of their subjection to them (and thereby to God). When a man covers his head when praying etc., he 'dishonoureth his head'. 'Dishonoureth' is kataischuno – to bring shame or disgrace. To 'dishonour his head' means that a covering brings shame upon his lordship over females, reducing and cheapening God's order of things. The head should be made visible, because it is symbolic of God's rule. To cover it is to hide that rule and forms of godliness.

A woman, however, must not have her head uncovered whilst praying or prophesying. As has already been shown, there is no location or situation specifically mentioned in relation to this. So, it can apply to public or private activity. It is likely that the private location is mainly thought of, because prayer in public is bound to be very rare (see articles on prayer). The word for 'uncovered', akatakalyptos, means uncovered or unveiled.

At one time I thought this was an elaborate way of saying a woman must be covered by her own hair (e.g. kept long). I have come to see that this explanation is not proven but is conjecture. Another possible meaning is to have hair on the head, in contrast to pagan temple prostitutes, who shaved their hair off. However, if women wish to interpret it as a headscarf, it is up to their consciences.

We may deduce, then, that a man must not cover his head, but a woman must (in whatever way it is meant). In practical terms, if we take headcovering to mean an actual covering, a woman ought to have a simple veil or scarf or square of cloth available. When she is about to pray or prophesy, she must place this on her head as a mark of respect both to God and to males. (It is interesting that though the RC 'church' is false, women do this in both Orthodox and Romanist churches). A 'veil' is just a spreading-over of something.

It ought to be noted that where coverings are used the wearing of 'veils' is not compulsory in all circumstances. Women are compelled to wear them only when praying or prophesying. This is mentioned because some modern churches insist that women wear hats throughout the whole meeting or service. I have even heard of some who make this a necessary condition of admission/membership! Obviously, this makes that church authoritarian rather than with-authority. It places an onerous responsibility on women that ought not exist, and shows a

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

misunderstanding of these texts.

There are two ways to view the words 'dishonoureth her head'. It can mean that not wearing a covering shames her glory (her hair), or it can mean that it shames her 'head' – that is, her husband or other male. No doubt it includes both notions. To not cover her head is the same as being 'shaven', as was the custom of female prostitutes in pagan temples. A woman's hair is given to her as an adornment by God. It is her 'glory', to be shared by her husband (and may even be the 'covering'). To cut it off is to reject God's gift and to show contempt for her husband. It also places a question over her life, as she looked (in those days) like a prostitute.

Today we may say that women ought not shave their hair deliberately, or make it so short as to look manly. Both are rejections of God's gift. A woman's hair may be short, then, but long enough to be an adornment and is not simply cropped short to look manly (or like a prostitute: note how many lesbians crop their hair very short).

Paul says that if a woman refuses to wear a covering then she may as well be shorn of all her hair. He is not advocating this as a punishment, but is using rhetoric to show her shame. If, he says, it is a shame (e.g. at that time, to look like a prostitute) to have all her hair removed or cropped, then she must wear a head covering as a sign of respect for God's wish.

Paul repeats his assertion: a man must not cover his head (when praying or prophesying) because he is the 'image and glory of God'. Man is the very moral and spiritual likeness (image) and honourable replica (glory) of God/His image. We know that most men do not live up to this image, but, nevertheless, we are *made* as such. Which is why men who do not live up to this image must eventually be discarded by God. Male readers – beware.

Women, however, are not made in the image of God*, but are the 'glory of the man'. That is, she belongs to man and is only to be praised when she is subject to him. That is why lesbians are inglorious. Not only are they conducting themselves in a sexually immoral way, but they are rejecting the rightful glory that is theirs; that is, subject to men. They throw away the glory of women. (*Requires more research).

As we see in verse 8, man is made from the earth by God, but woman was made from man's body. Thus, the first man came from God, but the first woman came from the man. This is why

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

woman is subject to man, the proper order of creation that still applies to male and female alike throughout time.

Sadly, I must add a note to this, because of the sinful nature of humankind. Men may take this to mean they can rule women with a rod of iron. This is not so. Men are to love and cherish their women, whether they are daughters, wives or mothers. They must also treat them with utter respect and protect them from harm. It is not a charter to abuse their women or to deny them growth as human beings, or to keep them locked up or away from the rest of society (as happens in some Islamic countries).

Men may not beat their wives, or impose a strict and harsh regime upon them, or abuse them emotionally or verbally. This must be said, because some so-called 'Christian' men are known to be brutal toward their wives. (If this is known to occur, it is up to the local church to rebuke them and, if necessary, exclude them from fellowship until and if they repent and turn back to God). The glory of God cannot justify mistreating the glory of their own persons (women)!!

The man was not created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man (verse 9). She is his 'help-meet' or companion, but subject to him. The man is the head of his household and the woman ought not usurp this position. She may be the mistress of her own home, but this must be done under the overall headship of her husband. (Obviously, where a woman has no husband this cannot apply and she must do what is fitting).

Because of all these considerations, the woman must "have power on (her) head". She must have exousia on her head. That is, a covering by God's permission (whereas a man does not have such permission) and as a sign of being under subjection to both God and man. It is a sign of a husband's authority over his wife, and removal of the covering means rejection of that authority, against God's will.

This 'power' also includes the idea of liberty and even jurisdiction. Though such an interpretation of this text is less direct, it can be applied, because it is a truism that there is 'freedom in restriction'. A woman who recognizes and accepts her true position in creation is likely to have more freedom of mind and heart than the one who fights against it. She will be happier and more contented.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

The final part of verse 10 is more mysterious: “because of the angels”. The word ‘because’, *dia*, can have one of many explanations. It can mean ‘through’, or with the help of, the angels, or ‘because’ of them; but if it means ‘because of them’... what does it imply? ‘Because’ could also be interpreted as the reason for the action.

It does not end there, for ‘angels’, *aggelos*, does not always refer to heavenly spiritual beings. It can refer to a messenger from God, including Apostles or preachers. How, then, should we interpret this part of the text, for it is curiously written? The simplest interpretation is that women should obey this command because the Apostles taught it to them. The harder interpretation could be that if they refuse the teaching they are in danger of harmful intervention by angelic hosts. My own view is that Paul is merely saying that women ought to listen to the Apostles who taught them in the first place, being authorities within the churches. Otherwise, to bring in an almost isolated meaning would be most odd.

Verses 11-16

1.

“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

2.

For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

3.

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

4.

Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

5.

But if a woman have long hair, it is glory to her: for hair is given her for a covering.

6.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.”

Paul continues on the theme of womanly subjection, but also touches on other linked matters. He says that whilst all the above is true, woman cannot exist without the man, nor the man without the woman, ‘in the Lord’, or under the lordship of God. Perhaps modern relationships of a perverted nature ought to be reminded of this fact.

Since creation, of course, men are born of women (verse 12) and women need men for procreation, and all is under God. Paul invites the men of Corinth to judge for themselves, to consider the matter and come to a conclusion: is it right that a woman prays without a head covering? Now that they knew the reasons why, could they allow their women to pray or prophesy with heads uncovered?

He continues – is there not the inner knowledge that men should not have long hair like women? In particular he is talking about men who adorn their hair as women do, trying to feminize themselves. Is it natural, he asks? No, it is not, as most men today will readily admit. Why is it that men generally see long ‘fancy’ hair on a man as feminine? It is because such knowledge is inbuilt. Such hair on a man is a ‘shame’ – atimia, dishonourable and a disgrace. Even the word ‘vile’ is included as a meaning! It is to be despised and lowly esteemed (from the root atimos). (Was Christ’s hair, then, short?).

On the other hand if a woman has long hair it is to her glory, she can be praised for its beauty. Based on the root word kome such hair is an ornament (the length only being secondary and implied). There is, then, a difference between long hair itself and long hair that is braided or somehow made ornamental. On a woman hair as an ornament is acceptable, but on a man it is to be despised. For a woman, her long hair is a mantle or covering, for a man it is a shame.

Paul adds that if anyone wishes to argue against these things, there is no such custom (e.g. women not covering their heads) in the churches or amongst Christian teachers, for them to use in their argument.

Verses 17-22

1.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

“Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

2.

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

3.

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

4.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.

5.

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

6.

What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and the shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.”

Next, Paul says, he comes to a matter that is causing strife amongst Christians in the church at Corinth. It is not something he can praise them for, because when they ‘come together’ (e.g. for meetings) they come together not for good, but for what is sinful.

Why? The first thing is that there were divisions, schisma, in the church. It was being rent apart (schizo) by dissension. And, says Paul, He partly believes it, given the news brought to him by friends at Corinth, he thinks it is true. He said that heresies *must* arise in the churches to test them. Heresies (hairesis) are those choices made by men that are opposed to God’s will and

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

declarations. They are believed and taught by men for their own ends. They are personal opinions dressed as scripture. From the root haireomai it means that men prefer their own version; it is a deliberate choice of sin over holiness, of men's views over God's will.

These divisions come about so that the churches can see who is 'acceptable', dokimos; it can refer to those who are acceptable to people who believe in their heresies, or it can refer to those who arise as a result of heresy to combat it. Either way, both are tested by God's word and one is found to be wrong and to be rejected. Both will become obvious (manifest – phaneros).

Paul says that because of their vested interests and personalised opinions, they do not come together for the Lord's sake at communion at all, but only to eat and be merry! Each one comes to the table just to greedily devour as much food as possible, often taking someone else's share. Paul speaks of communion as being a formal meal at a single table around which members all sat. This was a proper meal, and communion as we now know it was part of a main meal, not a separate rite. At that time it would have been a 'supper' or evening meal, a kind of snack.

At these meals some were gorging themselves whilst others remained hungry, and some were drunk. This implies that the wine used at these communion tables was fermented and that 'drunken' was an excess of the ordinary drinking of wine. For goodness' sake, says Paul, have you not got homes to go to, in which you can eat and drink as you wish? Why bring dishonour to the Lord's Supper like this? Why come ravenous so that you eat someone else's portion, shaming the whole congregation, some of whom are without means to buy their own meals? Can I praise you in all this, he asks? Certainly not!

Verses 23-27

1.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

2.

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

3.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

4.

For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

5.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Paul calls for the Corinthians to listen to what he said on this issue, because God had shown him what to say. It was this – that on the night that Jesus was betrayed he picked up bread that was on the table. This bread was artos or shewbread, oblong or round like a cake. About one inch or 2.5 centimetres thick, it was as big as a large plate. It was made to be broken by hand rather than cut with a knife, and was simply made of water and flour. They were often consecrated to God at communion. (Though artos can also refer to food of any kind, this does not appear to be the meaning in this case).

Jesus expressed gratitude to God for the provision of the bread and then he roughly broke up the bread into pieces. When He had done so, He said to those around the table: Eat this bread, for it is symbolic of my dead body that has been broken apart for your sakes. When you eat it, remember Me; recollect Who I am and what I have done.

Nowhere does Christ say that it was His actual body or blood. The word used, 'in remembrance', is anamnesis which can only mean 'a remembering, or recollection'. Taken from anamimnesko, it means to 'call to remembrance', or 'call to mind', 'to remind', to 'remember and consider'. Thus, the Romanist position is completely false and untenable.

When they had eaten the bread, Christ then picked up a cup containing wine. This had the double meaning of being a drinking vessel and being Christ's lot in life, to have his blood shed. He told the disciples that the cup contained wine that represented the 'new testament' or promise. They were to remind themselves of this fact every time they drank wine at communion.

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

Note that no particular type of bread or wine is demanded, nor are we given any number of times we ought to have communion. The facts as given are: we should meet for a meal together and, as part of that meal, we should remind ourselves of Who Christ is, what He did on the cross, and what He taught us. In essence, then, communion is a kind of catechism. It should not be the formalised ritual most churches have, but a simple communal meal at which Christ is remembered. Note that this communion is not a rite to be administered by a defined person, but a sharing of a meal at which someone proposes a reminiscence of Christ. Thus, it is not necessary for a pastor, or an 'ordained man', to give out the wine or bread.

The whole point of this part of the meal is to remember Christ as a Person, and what He did for us on the cross. This we ought to do throughout history until He returns (i.e. the end of time). So, says Paul, because of what the bread and the wine represent, if anyone comes to the table unworthily (wanting only to get drunk or to eat like gluttons), they will desecrate the table by doing so 'unworthily', anxious – unfit for the occasion – and so will demean and dishonour what Christ did, to such an extent that they will be held guilty of killing Him.

Verses 28-32

1.

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

2.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the lord's body.

3.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

4.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

5.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

the world.”

Therefore, says Paul, because of the serious implications, everyone who comes to communion must ‘examine himself’ so that he eats and drinks worthily. Each of us must test ourselves to see if there is anything in us that will cause ourselves and the church dishonour. If we come to communion in an unholy way, we will bring damnation upon ourselves (verse 29). ‘Damnation’ is *krima*, judgment or condemnation by God, deserving of punishment. God must pass this sentence because, by coming unworthily, we do not ‘discern’ the Lord’s body. That is, we ‘desert’ Him by opposing Him. We can do this in many ways. Therefore, we should not come to communion if we wish only to eat and drink, or if we harbour sin in our hearts against others.

Some defied this teaching and became very sick or even died (verse 30). Whilst this can have a metaphorical meaning, it is not the meaning here, which is literal. Paul is warning Christians that their sin will bring God’s wrath upon themselves. He will cause them to be sick or to die. What applied to the Corinthians also applies to us.

It is far better, says Paul, that we judge our own actions and intentions, before *God* judges us, with bad or fatal results. Repent and change, rather than become sick or dead. God

must

and

will

bring His judgment upon those who disobey in this matter, because He does not want us to die alongside the world, in our sin. So, God will chasten or teach us, as one teaches a small child. If this means physical punishment, then so be it, but He hopes we will all listen to counsel of pastors and others before it ever reaches such a final stage.

Verses 33&34

1.

“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

2.

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.”

1 Corinthians 11

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 04 October 2016 09:59

Therefore, says Paul, when you come together for communion (a meal that incorporates the Lord's supper), see to it that you watch out for the good of each other. Let others eat and drink first and do not be gluttonous or drunk. Show love and do not hate. Take time to get to know each other and keep each other in mind, lovingly with concern.

The communion meal would appear to be nominal – snacks rather than a full meal – for Paul says that if we are hungry we ought to eat at home first. Better to eat at home than to bring the table into disrepute. Do these things, he says, and I will wait until I come to see you, to sort out the other problems.

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