

# publicservice

## Introduction

What happens when Christians gather? What are we there for? Many church families are full of grumbling as people find they are not "having their needs met." One group prefers one style, another prefers another; it's a war of preferences as each person puts in a bid for having things the way they like them.

Or maybe you're comfortable... but the comfort zone is a small and cozy one. A few good friends, a chance to catch up over coffee after the service... and that's it for another week.

Revise: Look back at what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1. Remember, he was talking about the issue of what to do when what you eat or drink is potentially divisive. The key words are these:

**For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many,  
so that they may be saved.**

What happens when you take these words and apply them to church meetings? Instead of seeking our own good, we'll be seeking to serve. Sadly, as we'll see in chapter 11, some of the Corinthians are missing the point.

## Serving in Prayer

a) Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. (Try not to react too strongly to the cultural issues in this passage!) From verse 5 and verses 13 to 16, what seems to be happening during prayer times in the Corinthian church?

b) In the context of their culture, what statement are the Corinthian Christian women making?

c) Paul wants to uphold two key principles. Make a note of them:

v3

v11

The details of this passage are notoriously hard to understand. What sort of head coverings is he talking about? What do they actually signify? What does he mean by the phrase "because of the angels" (v10)? Does "headship" imply authority? You may like to study these things further... but for now, let's focus on the main point.

d) What does Paul want these women to "signify" when they pray or prophecy (speak on behalf of God) in a church meeting? How might this involve the principle we saw in 10:33?

Public prayer is an opportunity to serve. It's certainly not the place for pointing-scoring, or asserting rights. Can you think of any ways in which we can serve one another better in this area?



## Serving in the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is another area of church life that the Corinthians were getting badly wrong. While we have reduced the Lord's Supper to a ritual with small pieces of bread and tiny cups of grape-juice, in Corinth it was a full meal.

a. How does Paul sum up their situation in verse 17?

b. Read verses 23 to 26 aloud, emphasising the words "which is for you" and "remembrance of me."

Think about it...

If you say you're remembering the death of Jesus on your behalf, how will you logically want to be treating other people?

c. Now read verses 18 to 22. What's going wrong?

d. Why does this make it "not the Lord's Supper"? (v20)

e. How are they (again) forgetting Paul's example in 10:33?

f. Note that the words "of the Lord" do not actually appear in the original Greek text of verse 29. Read verses 22 to 32 omitting these words. Look back to 10:17. What body do you think the Corinthians are failing to recognise?

g. What is Paul's practical solution in 11:33-34?

## Public Service Today

Our "consumer mentality" can make us think that the public meetings of God's people are simply for our own satisfaction. They're not! We don't come together to be served, but to serve... whether in the way we pray, the way we share the Lords Supper, who we choose to talk to, where we sit, how we sing, the way we serve morning tea... and in countless other ways.

As a group, list some ways you can serve more effectively next time we meet as God's people. Be practical.

