

Series: Together Toward Maturity

Inductive Bible Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16



Step 1: Observation – What does the passage say?

Read **1 Corinthians 11:1–16** carefully and slowly. This passage deals with worship, headship, honor, and cultural expressions within the Corinthian church.

Observation Prompts:

- What instructions does Paul give?
- What relationships are described?
- What words or ideas are repeated?
- What cultural practices are mentioned?
- How does Paul connect theology and practice?

Read the passage and note what you see:

What command or encouragement does Paul give in verse 1?

What order or structure does Paul describe in verse 3?

What does Paul say brings honor or dishonor when men and women pray or prophesy in worship? (vv. 4-5)

What instructions does Paul give regarding covering or uncovering the head?(vv. 6-7)

What instructions does Paul give regarding covering or uncovering the head, and how does he connect this to glory and honor? (vv.8-10)

What balance does Paul introduce in verses 11–12?

What appeal does Paul make to nature or common practice in verses 13–15?

How does Paul conclude the discussion in verse 16?

Step 2: Interpretation – What does the passage mean?

Paul is addressing **order and honor in worship**, not value or worth. The Corinthians lived in a culture where outward symbols (like head coverings and hairstyles) communicated loyalty, morality, and honor. Paul's concern is that worship visibly reflects **God's design, mutual honor, and Christ-centered authority**.

Questions to Explore:

What does Paul mean by “head” in verse 3?

How does this relate to authority, responsibility, and source rather than value?

Why does Paul connect outward actions during prayer and prophecy with honor or dishonor? What does this suggest about how worship reflects deeper spiritual realities? (vv.4-5)

How does Paul use the ideas of glory and honor to explain different expressions for men and women in worship? What distinction is he making without implying inequality? (vv.6-7)

How does Paul ground his instructions in creation and purpose rather than preference or opinion? What does this reveal about order and authority in God's design? (vv.8-10)

Why does Paul intentionally balance his argument in verses 11–12? What does this teach about mutual dependence between men and women in the Lord?

How does Paul use cultural norms (nature, hair length) to support his point? (vv.13–15)

What does verse 16 suggest about unity and church-wide practice?

Word Study Suggestions:

- **Head (v.3):** Greek *kephalē* — source, authority, or leadership responsibility.
- **Honor/Dishonor (vv.4–6):** refers to respect toward the head..
- **Authority (v.10):** sign or symbol of authority, order, or accountability.
- **Nature (v.14):** cultural norms shaped by creation and custom.
- **In the Lord (v.11):** life lived under Christ's rule and grace.

Step 3: Application – How should I respond?

This passage challenges believers to think deeply about **how worship reflects what we believe about God, authority, and one another**. While cultural expressions may change, the **principles of honor, order, humility, and unity** remain.

Personal Reflection: Do my attitudes and actions in worship reflect honor toward God and others?

How do I respond to God's design for order and authority — with trust or resistance?

Where might I be tempted to resist God's order instead of receiving the truth of His word with faith?

What principle from this passage applies to every culture and generation, even if the expression looks different today?

What part of this passage felt most challenging or uncomfortable—and why?

What does honoring God's design look like in my daily life, not just in church?

Do I trust that God's design is ultimately for my good, even when I don't fully understand it?

Summary Truths:

- Worship is not only internal — it is also visible and communal.
- God's design includes order, authority, and mutual honor.
- Headship reflects responsibility and accountability, not superiority.
- Men and women are equal in value and purpose, yet distinct in role.
- Our goal in worship is not self-expression, but God's glory.

Optional Memory Verse:

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.— 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 (ESV)

Prayer Prompt:

“Lord, teach me to worship You with humility and reverence. Help me honor Your design and reflect Your glory in how I live, serve, and gather with Your people. Unite Your church in truth, love, and submission to Christ.”

For Further Study:

- Ephesians 5:21–33 — Mutual submission and Christlike love
- Philippians 2:1–11 — Christ's humility as our model
- Colossians 3:12–17 — Order, unity, and worship in the body