

# Under Cover

July 2 – 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

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Day 183 – 182 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We are still working our way through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He has already addressed major problems in the church (1:1-6:20). He is now responding to questions they had about the Christian life (i.e., eating meat dedicated to idols, 8:1-10:33). Next, Paul provided instructions for how the church should operate, as well as everyone's role in it. In Chapter 11, he addressed the issue of head coverings and the Lord's Supper.

Head coverings were common in the Old and New Testaments, both for Jews and Gentiles. Evidently, there was contention in the Corinthian church regarding head coverings, so Paul explained their theological importance. The principle was this — **a head covering was a practical way to display one's understanding of authority and submission**. Paul wrote, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head (or authority) of every man, and the man is the head (or authority) of a woman, and God is the head (or authority) of Christ" (v.3).

The word *head* here does not infer superiority or inferiority but rather leadership. Even in the Godhead, in which all members of the trinity are equally God, there is authority and submission. God the Son (Jesus) submits to the authority or leadership of God the Father.

Likewise, men and women are equals, both made in the image of God, but God has assigned headship, authority, or leadership to men. The headship role of men was not self-imposed but rather given by God in the created order. Paul wrote, "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man (at creation), for indeed the man was not created for the woman's sake, but the woman was created for the man's sake" (v.8, 9).

However, to keep men from becoming prideful of their station, Paul reminded them that they are not independent of women, nor are women

independent of men (v.11). Rather they depend on each other and, therefore, must learn to work together for their mutual benefit (v.12).

So then, what did head coverings (hair or robes) have to do with authority and submission? Again, **head coverings displayed one's understanding of the order of authority and submission**. Men uncovered their heads to display their submission to God (v.4, 7), and women covered their heads to display their submission to their husband (v.5-7).

## Daily Reflection

While head coverings are not an essential part of western civilization today, that does not devalue the importance of Paul's instructions. **While the external practice may have changed, the internal principle still applies. We are all under the cover of authority, and therefore we all must practice submission**, yielding our will to the will of another.

Is submission easy or difficult for us? Explain.

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While the Corinthians may have followed the letter of the law regarding head coverings, they could have easily disrespected the spirit of the law — submission to authority. We can do the same. **Submission boils down to the attitude of our heart**. What does it require to ensure our hearts are in the right place to submit?

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# A Worthy Manner

July 3 – 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

## Today in Your Reading

Paul continued to provide instructions regarding the way the Corinthians should behave when they “came together” as a church or local body of believers (v.17, 18, 20, 33, 34). In the previous passage, Paul addressed the issue of head coverings (v.2-16). Next, he addressed abuses of the Lord’s Supper (v.17-34).

As a reminder, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the last night with His disciples (Lk. 22:14-20). Jesus took the bread and broke it, saying, “This is My body, which is given for you” (v.19). The broken bread was symbolic of the suffering He endured on our behalf. Jesus also took a cup of wine and used it as a symbol of the new covenant He made through His shed blood. Today, you and I partake of the Lord’s Supper to remember Christ’s sacrifice for us on the cross and to look forward to His return.

With so much symbolism, we should take the Lord’s Supper seriously, in deep reflection. However, the Corinthians abused the Lord’s Supper in several ways. In fact, the ordinance was a cause of dispute and division instead of worship and commemoration (1 Cor. 11:17-19). As a result, they came under the judgment of God (v.30-34), which is why Paul admonished and corrected them (v.17, 22).

First, some members of the Corinthian church were not waiting for others before eating (v.33). Second, because they did not wait for everyone to arrive, they got more food than the others, so much that those arriving later got nothing and left hungry (v.21). Third, those who started eating and drinking early became drunk, thereby disgracing themselves, the church, and the ordinance (v.21). Fourth, instead of a commemorative meal, some members used the Lord’s Supper as their dinner (v.21, 34). Finally, because of these abuses, there arose divisions among them (v.17-19), and the Lord judged them harshly with weakness, sickness, and even death (v.30).

Paul emphasized the seriousness of the Lord’s Supper by reminding the Corinthians of Jesus’ words connecting the bread and cup to His body and blood (v.23-26). Then, he added this admonishment, “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord” (v.27). In other words, **careless, irreverent behavior disrespects and dishonors the sacrifice the Lord made on our behalf.**

## Daily Reflection

Paul’s correction for their abuses was self-examination (v.28, 29), carefully and prayerfully considering their attitude, motives, and mindset before partaking of the ordinance. If they did not “judge themselves rightly” and make appropriate corrections, then they were inviting God’s judgment on themselves (v.29).

Simply put, the Lord’s Supper should not be taken lightly. We should partake of it in a worthy manner. While the Corinthian abuses may seem foreign to us today, we can still take the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. How so?

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To ensure that one is properly prepared and avoids dishonoring the Lord’s Supper, each person should examine himself first. Do you? What all should that self-examination entail?

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# Gifted for Good

July 4 – 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 185 – 180 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, in which he addressed several questions they had regarding the church. In previous passages, he gave instructions about marriage, food dedicated to idols, head coverings, and the Lord’s Supper. Now, he moved to the topic of spiritual gifts. Evidently, the Corinthians were not only confused about the source and purpose of the gifts, but they were also divided over “the best” as well.

First, what is the source and definition of a spiritual gift? The word *gift* insinuates something that is bestowed by one to another without merit, meaning the gift was not earned or deserved but endowed freely by the giver. In this case, **the giver is God**. At salvation, when His Spirit indwells an individual, he or she is endowed by God with at least one ability, aptitude, or enablement for His purposes. Therefore, **every follower of Christ has a spiritual gift** (v.6, 7, 11).

What are God’s purposes for spiritual gifts? Paul wrote each believer has been given a gift by God “as He desired and willed for the common good” of the church (v.7, 11, 18). In other words, **one’s spiritual gift is to be used for the edification and ministry to fellow believers in the local church body**. Paul explained that just as a human body has many parts or members, and those members have different functions, **they all serve the good of the whole body** (v.12-18).

Unfortunately, the Corinthians focused more on their diversity than they did their unity. Some used their gifts arrogantly, to bring attention to themselves. Others were discontent with their gift and became jealous of those with “greater gifts.” Thus, **Paul emphasized the fact that a human body needs all its parts to function properly** (v.18-25). Those parts that seem less important are actually very important; and if one body part does not work properly, the rest of the body suffers (v.26, 27).

So then, what are the spiritual gifts? While we do not have an exhaustive list, Paul provided some of them — wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, discernment, prophesying, effecting of miracles, speaking in and interpreting tongues, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership, mercy, helps, and administration (v.8-10, 28-30; see also *Rom. 12:6-8*).

## Daily Reflection

**You’ve been given a spiritual gift by God to be used for His glory and the good of His church.** How can you discover your gift(s)? Pray and ask God to reveal it to you. Talk to those who know you best and ask what gift(s) they see in you. Also, a spiritual gifts assessment might be helpful (ask someone at your church for one).

If you know your gift(s), write it/them here.

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How did you discover your spiritual gift(s)?

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How are you using your spiritual gift(s) for the good of the church?

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**God has given you a spiritual gift for good, just as He desired.** Therefore, be content. Also, avoid becoming arrogant. Use your gift(s) for Him and others, rather than to bring attention to yourself.

# The More Excellent Way

July 5 – 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 186 – 179 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's comments to the Corinthians about spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-31). Stuck between two practical chapters on the gifts (1 Cor. 12, 14), Paul inserted perhaps the most familiar verses in his letters — "the Love Chapter." However, this famous chapter is often disconnected with its context or setting. We must keep in mind Paul's discussion of the spiritual gifts. It appeared that the Corinthians were using them selfishly or pridefully, rather than to serve others. Paul challenged them to consider "a more excellent way" (12:31).

First, Paul pointed out that **no spiritual gift is meaningful or effective apart from love** (v.1-3). If we use our spiritual gift without love, then we are simply using it to benefit ourselves, to show off. We are wasting our time because there is no reward. God gives us spiritual gifts for the good of others — the church — not so that we can puff ourselves up with pride. Love, then, is the indispensable element, the missing ingredient, the necessary attitude that must accompany the use of our spiritual gift(s).

Second, **Paul highlighted the superiority of God's love compared to the inferiority of worldly love** (v.4-7). Worldly love is a feeling, an emotion, or something we get from others. But Paul described love as an action, something we do or an attitude we have towards others.

We are familiar with Paul's list of love's attitudes and actions, but let's consider why he wrote this list. Could it be that the Corinthians lacked these qualities? For example, were they impatient, unkind, jealous, arrogant, lying, acting improperly, angry, rejoicing in failure, unreliable, unforgiving, and untrustworthy? God's love is a better way to deal with people.

Paul had many options for love in the Greek language, but he chose the word *agape*, **love that is of God and from God** (1 Jn. 4:7, 8). In describing this love, Paul basically described

God the Father, whose great love was displayed in Christ, His Son. What is so special about *agape* love? We have love, but it's not His love. God loves the **unlovable**. We have trouble loving the unlovable. God loves the **unloving**. It is difficult for us to love those who do not love us. God's love is **unconditional**. His love is not earned. God's love is **unselfish**. He sacrificed His Son while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8).

How do we get this kind of love? **God's love is in us because His Spirit already indwells us**. Paul wrote, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). God, who is love, loves people through us because He lives in us.

## Daily Reflection

Paul wrapped up his reflection on love by comparing love to the spiritual gifts (v.8-13). His conclusion had two parts. **The fruit of the Spirit are greater than the gifts of the Spirit, and the greatest fruit of the Spirit is love** (v.13). Love was the way of Jesus' new commandment (Jn. 13:34, 35). Love was the more excellent way of Paul's instructions to the church. Maybe there is something about love that God does not want us to miss.

Review Paul's description of love (v.4-8a). Does this describe you? Which aspect of love is the most difficult for you? Explain why.

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Do you love the unlovable and the unloving? Do you love others unselfishly and unconditionally? **No one cares what you know, give, say, or do, unless there is love. Without love, these things are neither a profit to them or to you.**

# Clear Communication

July 6 – 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 187 – 178 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In our current section, he provided them instructions about spiritual gifts (starting in *12:1*). They were using their spiritual gifts proudly for self-display, instead of using them for the edification or benefit of others. Thus, Paul explained the need for "a more excellent way," that our gifts must be practiced in love, for the common good, or else they were of no use in the church (*13:1-13*).

Next, Paul addressed the Corinthians' infatuation with speaking in tongues. Naturally, the Greeks, who loved and elevated entertaining and educational oratory (speaking), were drawn to the spiritual gift of tongues. But rather than use the gift for the benefit of others, the Corinthians were speaking in tongues for dramatic self-display (like acting), which Paul condemned. Instead, he wished that they would seek "the greater gifts," like prophecy (*12:31; 14:1*). Therefore, in our passage today, Paul contrasted the gifts of tongues and prophecy.

What is the gift of prophecy? When we hear of someone prophesying, we think of Old Testament prophets predicting future events. Future-telling is one aspect of prophecy which we do not see much anymore. Today, **prophesying involves more proclamation than prediction**. The word *prophecy* means to speak or tell forth (declare) the will of God (truth) related to the present or future. A prophet today would be called a preacher or teacher, not revealing something new from God (like those who wrote the Bible) but rather declaring what God has already said (*2 Pet. 2:1*).

Why did Paul prefer prophesying over speaking in tongues? He wrote, "The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church" (*1 Cor. 14:4*). What did he mean? Prophecy, he said, is "good for edification, exhortation, and consolation" (*v.3*). We might say that prophecy is good for

teaching (instruction), inspiring (motivating to action), and encouraging (giving comfort).

Paul gave another reason to support the gift of prophecy. Most of the time, when someone speaks in tongues, there is no one to interpret what is said, so the gift misses the point (*v.5, 6*). It is of no use to the church. It is like a musical instrument that plays random notes but not music, or a bugle that does not give clear battle signals (*v.7-9*). **If the message is not understood by its audience, then what is the point of communicating it?** No one can agree to it or add his "Amen" (*v.16*). Prophecy, on the other hand, needs no interpretation. The hearer immediately understands what is being said.

To communicate means to deliver a message, but for communication to occur, the receiver must understand it. In other words, communication is a joint venture, requiring at least two people, one imparting information and the other retaining it. **If one imparts information and the other does not receive it or retain it, then communication is not achieved.**

## Daily Reflection

As a teacher, communication is important to me. Over the years, my teaching has fallen into one of three categories — instruction (knowledge), inspiration (motivating to action), and encouragement (*v.3*). At times, I believe the church needs all three facets of teaching (*v.17-25*). Which one of these three facets do you appreciate or enjoy the most? Explain.

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**Is your communication clear to others? If not, then you might just be talking to yourself.**

# The God of Order

July 7 – 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 188 – 177 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We completed Paul's discussion about spiritual gifts in his first letter to the Corinthians. He has answered the question of the origin, purpose, types, and motivation of spiritual gifts (12:1-13:13). He has also contrasted the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues (14:1-25). Now he finally addressed the practice of the gifts in the church assembly (v.26).

Before discussing the practice of the gifts, Paul laid down two principles undergirding his instructions. First, "all things had to be done for edification" (v.26). If an activity occurred in church that did not build up believers, then that activity was prohibited. Second, in order to achieve the first principle, Paul gave the second one — **"All things must be done properly and in an orderly manner"** (v.40).

Why must all things be done in an orderly manner? Paul said, **"God is not a God of confusion, but of peace"** (v.33). God wants His instructions, His encouragement, His gospel, and His commandments to be clear and obeyed. It is our spiritual enemy who distracts and disrupts God's message. Therefore, **if there is not order in a church service, and things seem a little chaotic or out of control, then that service is not glorifying to God or edifying His people.**

To that end, Paul provided regulations to ensure the spiritual gifts were practiced rightly. First, regarding tongues, there should be no more than three people speaking in tongues during a service. They should also speak one at a time and have an interpreter so everyone can know what is being said (v.27, 28). Otherwise, the gift of tongues should not be used in a service.

Second, regarding prophets (teachers), a maximum of three prophets can speak in a service, one at a time (v.29-32). Others should pass judgment on the prophecy, meaning they should evaluate the legitimacy of the message based on God's Word, to determine whether the

message is false prophecy or not. Those who receive the prophecy should remain quiet, not disrupting the message (v.30).

Third, Paul provided instructions for the women (v.34, 35). Evidently, in the Corinthian church, women were causing a disturbance during a prophecy, probably by asking questions, thereby undermining the speaker's authority. Their interruptions were causing disorder in the service. Remember, Paul's instructions were to avoid confusion and to promote clarity. Thus, he commanded these heckling women to be silent. If they had questions, Paul said, "Let them ask the men of their home" (husbands, fathers, grandfathers, etc., v.35). The intent of this command was not for all women to be always quiet in every situation (see 11:5).

Now, before we dismiss Paul's instructions as being opinion or specific to only Corinth, we must pay attention to two verses. First, Paul said that these regulations were "the Lord's commandment," not his opinions or preferences (v.37). Second, he said that these regulations were for "all the churches of the saints," not specifically for the Corinthians (v.33).

## Daily Reflection

When it comes to a church service, there is a great deal of liberty. Every church may look a little different. The church in Corinth shared the responsibility of teaching and exhortation (v.26). However, all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner for the goal of edifying the saints. Evaluate your church services. Are all things done in an orderly manner? Are all things edifying? Explain.

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**An orderly service honors the God of order.**



# By the Grace of God

July 8 – 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 189 – 176 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We moved to a new section of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, in which he considered the importance of the resurrection of Jesus (v.1-58). The resurrection is an essential element of the gospel, for if Christ is dead, then the message of the good news of salvation is also dead. It seems that some of the Corinthian believers struggled with this doctrine, so Paul reinforced its validity.

In the opening verses (v.1, 2), Paul explained that he was “making known the gospel” that he had originally preached to the Corinthians. He was going to restate the key elements that they heard and believed, “if they held fast the word” (v.2). Paul was not insinuating that they could lose their salvation or that they had to maintain salvation somehow by holding on to it. He was making it clear that if they did not hold fast or believe all of what he preached (including the resurrection), then they were not saved but rather “believed in vain” (v.2).

Next, Paul shared the three elements essential, or “of first importance,” to the gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (v.3). These things happened “according to the scriptures” or the Old Testament (v.3, 4). Remember, the Bible is all about Christ. His life and ministry were concealed in the Old Testament by prophecy and symbolism (types).

Then, Paul provided a list of people to whom Jesus appeared after being raised from the dead — Peter, the twelve Disciples, a crowd of 500 people, James (probably His brother), the Apostles, and finally to Paul (v.5-8). Since the idea of someone coming back from the dead is a difficult one to swallow, the Lord made sure that there were plenty of eyewitnesses to confirm it. In fact, Paul said that many of them were still alive to verify that it happened. The Mosaic law only required two or three witnesses to vouch for the truth of a story. Jesus had over 500 witnesses to vouch for His resurrection!

## Daily Reflection

We will continue our discussion of the resurrection’s importance in the days to come, but today let’s focus on Paul’s comments about himself. He made three self-effacing remarks and then an important declaration.

First, he said that he had an “untimely birth” (v.8). Paul was not questioning God’s timing related to his birth, but rather he was stating that he did not have the pleasure of being born earlier so that he could’ve lived with Christ. Second, Paul referred to himself as the least of the apostles, unfit for that title or task (v.9). Third, he viewed himself this way because he persecuted the church before his conversion.

By making these remarks, Paul was demonstrating modesty and humility. He recognized that he did not have the same path to God as others and, in fact, he was not worthy of all he had received or been privileged to witness. **His only explanation was God’s goodness. “By the grace of God, I am what I am,”** he wrote (v.10).

In many ways, we must claim that explanation as our own. **If it were not for the grace of God, we would not be who we are today. Knowing our past, knowing our hearts and minds, knowing our tendencies and selfish motivations, only God’s goodness would allow us to be a part of His forever family.** Would you agree?

Take a minute and write a prayer, thanking God for His goodness and grace in your life.

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