

Open in prayer

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷ Now in giving this instruction I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For to begin with, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ Indeed, it is necessary that there be factions among you, so that those who are approved may be recognised among you. ²⁰ When you come together, then, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. ²¹ For at the meal, each one eats his own supper. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk! ²² Don't you have homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you in this matter!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For whoever eats and drinks without recognising the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. ³¹ If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged, ³² but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather together you will not come under judgment. I will give instructions about the other matters whenever I come.

Introduction

Ø It is entirely possible to wake up on a Sunday morning, get dressed, come to church, sing songs, say prayers, and leave this building in a worse spiritual state than when you arrived. ●●

R In fact, the Apostle Paul looks at a thriving, gifted church in Corinth and delivers that verdict. ● He tells them, Your gatherings are doing more harm than good. ● Why? ● Because they thought worship was only about looking up. They forgot that the table of God forces us to look across. ●●

P Throughout Scripture, whenever God wants to seal a relationship with humanity, He throws a party. He serves a meal. ● In Genesis, Abraham feeds God under the oaks of Mamre. ● On Sinai, the elders see God and they eat and drink. ● In the Upper Room, Jesus transforms the Passover around a wooden table. ● And at the end of time, history wraps up not with a corporate meeting, but with a Marriage Supper. ●●

R Eating with God is the ultimate picture of vertical peace. ● But in Corinth, the horizontal reality was an absolute mess. The wealthy were feasting early. the working poor were arriving late to find empty plates. The communion table had become an exclusive country club. ●●

At this table, the gospel that secures our vertical identity must shatter our horizontal divisions. ● We cannot claim to love the God who is up there while neglecting the brother or sister sitting right here. ●●

R Today, Paul gives us a three-part diagnostic to expose our own fractures as we first Look Out. ●●

1) Look Out (1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

Meals between man and God in Scripture are covenantal markers. They reflect horizontal and vertical relational reality. But in Corinth, we see structural failure. A church breaking more than just social etiquette.

Paul begins this section with a severe rebuke. He looks at the corporate life of the church and delivers a shocking verdict. **Verse 17**, **Now** in giving this instruction I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. Think about that. It is possible for you to come to church a Sunday morning and leave in a worse spiritual state than when you arrived. And it's not about how you sing. Or the prayers you prayed. It's about how you love the man or woman standing next to you.

Paul traces the logic of their failure step by step. First, he addresses the report of their fractured relationships. **Verse 18**, **For** to begin with, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. σχίσματα. Schism. Divisions. Cracks in their relational foundation.

Then he provides a heavy, sobering reality. **Verse 19**, **Indeed**, it is necessary that there be factions among you, so that those who are approved may be recognised among you. Paul isn't condoning division. He is stating a divine reality. Their factions reveal who is genuinely approved by God, and who is playing social games.

Paul offers concrete proof of their corporate failure. **Verse 20**, **When you come together, then, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.** For at the meal, each one eats his own supper. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk! In the Greco-Roman world, meals were highly stratified by social class. A wealthy host would invite his high-status peers into the formal dining room, the triclinium. The elite would sit in comfort, eating premium food and drinking fine wine. Slaves were relegated to the atrium. Pushed out to the courtyard. Dished cheap rations. The system was built entirely on status, prestige, and socio-economic standing.

This worldly discrimination bled into the church. The wealthy elite probably arrived early because they had the luxury of time. They feasted on the covenantal meal, and then got drunk. Meanwhile, the poorer members arrived late after a brutal day of labor. And when they got to the table, nothing was left. They went hungry. The covenant meal had become an exclusive private country club.

Paul finishes his rebuke in **verse 22** with scathing questions. Don't you have homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you in

this matter! By treating the poor with contempt, they were actively despising the church of God. This is not a minor misunderstanding. It is a theological crisis. Their division was a functional denial of the cross.

Imagine a family dinner where the parents eat steak at the table while the children hunt for scraps on the floor. That would be grotesque. It would mock the very concept of family. That is exactly what happens when divisions dictate how we treat the household of faith. You cannot look up to God in worship while looking down on a brother or sister in pride.

We have the potential for division at Benoni Baptist Church too. Look across our main hall today. God has given us immense growth over the past two years. The older members who anchored this work when I arrived comprise about a third of our community now. The other two-thirds are newcomers who have arrived over the past two years. There is the potential for cliques to form. Division. The oldies and the newbies.

How do we practically break down the walls that separate us? Today, our rhythm has been intentionally disrupted. We have our bring-and-share lunch right after the service. And communion after that. Why? To remind us that early church communion occurred within a shared community meal. During the meal, we'll sit at long tables. And hopefully you'll sit along, or near enough to someone you don't know. Talk to them over the love feast. Get to know them.

How do we move past our divisions? How do we look beyond our own comfort, our own timing, and our own circles? We cannot rely on social etiquette. We must look to our objective standard.

2) **Look Up** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

In the Lord's Supper, the gospel levels the ground upon which we all stand. There are no VIP's at the foot of the cross.

How do you correct the horizontal abuse happening in the courtyard of Corinth? Paul forces the church to stop looking at one another's social status and look up to the vertical source. He does not offer them a lecture on modern social etiquette or a lesson in basic manners. Instead, he anchors them in what he received directly from the Lord. **Verse 23**, ²³ **For** I received **from** **the Lord** what I **also** passed on to you. This received tradition was delivered by the King Himself, and it cannot be edited by human pride.

Paul takes them back to the upper room. **On** the night when he was **betrayed**, **the**

Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Consider the weight of that timing. On the very night human treachery was doing its worst, divine mercy was doing its best. He took bread, broke it, and handed it to those who would soon scatter.

And then He attaches a perpetual command to the bread. Do this in remembrance of me. This is not a passive mental recollection of a dead historical figure. This is an active covenantal remembrance of our living King.

Verse 25, ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper. The fact that it was after supper is crucial. This wasn't part of the regular, casual consumption of food to fill an empty stomach. This cup was distinct. Set apart at the climax of the Passover meal to signify that the old shadows were fading away. Because the Truth had arrived.

And He said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. The New Covenant is God's unbreakable promise. Sealed by the blood of Jesus, to forgive sins fully and write His law on the hearts of His people. Unlike the old covenant that depended on obedience, this covenant rests on Christ's finished work. It creates a new humanity where every believer, regardless of status, enters on the same basis. Free grace. This New Covenant is not ratified by the blood of bulls, goats, or temple sacrifices. It is eternally ratified by the precious, unblemished blood of Jesus Christ Himself. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus concludes the instruction for the cup. Verse 25, Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. This is the ultimate status-shatterer. The cross leaves no room for human boasting. Every single person, whether a wealthy Greco-Roman homeowner who owns the estate or a destitute slave who just slipped in through the back door, every single person enters this New Covenant on the exact same basis. Unmerited, free grace. Everyone is entirely spiritually bankrupt without Jesus Christ. So absolutely no one can claim a higher status, or better seat at His table.

And this is so important for you to know. Every time you eat the bread and drink the cup, you are preaching a silent, visible, yet thunderous sermon. Verse 26, For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Just as a side note, this is why kids stay in our services on communion Sundays. So they can watch mom and dad preach to them as they eat the bread and drink the cup. The table is an ongoing, visible declaration that Christ's victory is final and His return is certain.

Verse 26 again, For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the

Lord's death until he comes. Until he comes. Unbeliever. Jesus came into the world 2,000 years ago to die on a cross to pay the price that your sins deserve. But he didn't stay dead. Jesus rose from the grave and ascended into heaven. And He will soon come again. And when he does it will be to collect His Church to Himself, and then judge the living and the dead. Friend, the door of salvation stands ajar. Run to it and you will be saved. Put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. You must do so at once. Because the door will not stay open forever. Until he comes. It might be a moment away. Repent for the forgiveness of your sins.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul instructs according to the Lord's very words how the Lord's Supper is to be taken. And it is a true, uncompromised proclamation of the gospel.

If the table demands a level ground, how do we spot the hidden pride lurking within our own hearts? How do we assess our own spiritual condition? To answer that, we must move from looking up, and we must begin to look in.

3) Look In (1 Corinthians 11:27-34)

In our church, our vertical relationship with God is on horizontal display. You cannot separate how you treat the God of heaven from how you treat the believer sitting next to you in this hall. To take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is to sin. Verse 27, So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. Can you see how we've often misunderstand this phrase. We look inward. We think an unworthy manner means having a flawed personal walk. Or struggling with a particular sin this week. But in context, eating unworthily means eating while ignoring your brothers and sisters. Fail to recognise the body does not mean failing to think about the physical flesh of Jesus on the cross. It means treating the church, Christ's corporate body, with contempt.

Verse 27 talks of an unworthy manner. It does not talk of an unworthy person. It says whoever eats in an unworthy manner. If you think the table is for perfect people, you will wrongly exclude yourself. But this warning is not against weak sinners. It is against proud, divisive, and selfish lifestyles that trample on other believers.

So we must examine ourselves before we take the Lord's Supper. Verse 28, Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. This is a call to look hard at your relationships within this community. Are you harbouring bitterness? Are you ignoring the poor? Are you staying in your

comfortable, elite social cliques while others are marginalized?

Verse 29, For whoever eats and drinks without recognising the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.³⁰ This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. Recognising the body means attending to the needs of others. It means caring for the social body of believers gathered for the meal. Corporate unity is so serious that God disciplines churches with sickness and physical death when they trample on horizontal love. This discipline is meant to spare the church from ultimate condemnation with the world. Do not misread this. This text is not a diagnostic tool for you to read your present illness as a specific punishment for a secret sin. This is covenantal judgment meant for restoration. It means you can come joyfully and freely to this table, as you abandon your sin. This is a great time to remember Jesus' death, but it is a terrifying time to play games with His bride.

The logic of the text is clear. If we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, and disciplined by the Lord, it is so we may be spared. Verse 31, If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged,³² but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world.

Paul's final application is intensely practical. Verse 33, Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather together you will not come under judgment. I will give instructions about the other matters whenever I come. If you are just hungry for food, eat at home. When you gather as the church, you gather to care for the body.

A bridge cannot stand if the vertical pillars are strong but the horizontal deck is completely fractured. It collapses into the river below. You cannot look up to God in worship while looking down on a brother or sister in pride.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, Paul warns that without self-examination and communal care the consequence will be covenantal judgment. Paul commands the Corinthians to stop divisions and examine themselves so the Lord's Supper will proclaim the gospel rather than invite judgment.

Conclusion

R And so we find ourselves right back where we began. The sobering reality that it is entirely possible to come to church and leave in a worse spiritual state than when you arrived. ●●

Throughout history, God's covenant meals have always demanded both a vertical peace with Him and a horizontal peace with each other. ● At the Lord's Supper, the gospel that secures our vertical identity must shatter our horizontal divisions. ● We cannot look up to the God who is up there while neglecting the brother or sister sitting next to us. ●●

R To protect this unity, Paul has given us our map. We must Look Out to confront the cultural fractures and cliques that threaten to split us apart. ● We must Look Up to anchor our souls afresh in the finished, unmerited work of Jesus Christ. ● And we must Look In to soberly examine our corporate behavior before we ever dare to touch the bread or drink the cup. ●●

If you are here today and you are an unbeliever, look up to the Saviour who died to pay for your sins and run to the open door of grace before it closes. ● And if you are a believer, look across the aisle today at our bring-and-share lunch, step out of your comfortable circle, and love the family Christ died to unite. ●●

Let us step forward to the table not as isolated individuals, but as one body, fully reconciled to God and fiercely committed to one another. ●●

Amen. ●●●

Close in prayer

Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:13, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Homiletic indicators

- The operative word in the sentence is underlined.
- R – Instruction
 - **Body:** Natural, one hand gestures.
 - **Voice:** measured, firm.
- ^ – Uncion
 - **Body:** Forward, expressive.
 - **Voice:** Raised, faster.
- Ø – Fear
 - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
 - **Voice:** Breathy, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
- O' – Anger
 - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
 - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
- P – Happiness
 - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
 - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
- Å – Sadness
 - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
 - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
- □ – Disgust
 - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
 - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
- ɹ – Surprise
 - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
 - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
- • – Pause
 - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict.
 - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement).
 - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
 - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

1) A rebuke (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).

[S] Paul answers a new question by bringing a rebuke, [G] the reason is their coming together is a mess, [G] because there are divisions among them, [I] the result is they aren't eating the Lord's Supper, [G] but their own supper, [I] evidenced by the neglect of some, [I] and the indulgence of others, [A] leaving Paul to wonder if their motive is to 1.) despise the church, 2.) and humiliate the poor.

[S] ¹⁷ Now in giving this instruction [PAP] I do not praise [PAI] you,

[G] since you come together [PMI, συνέρχεσθε] not [4] [for the better] [-] but [for the worse].

[G] ¹⁸ For to begin with, I hear [PAI] that when you come together [PMP] [as a church] there are [PAN]
2.) divisions [among you],

1.) [P] and in part I believe [PAI] it.

¹⁹ Indeed, [C] it is necessary [PAI] that there be factions [among you],

[E] so that those who are [PAN] approved may be [AMS] recognised [among you].

[I] ²⁰ When you come together [PMP], then, it is [PAI] not to eat [PAN] the Lord's Supper.

[G] ²¹ For at the meal, each one eats [AAN] his own supper. [I] So one person is hungry [PAI]
[I] while another gets drunk [PAI]!

a.) ²² Don't you have [PAI] homes in which 1.) to eat [PAN] and 1.) [S] drink [PAN]?

b.) [A] Or 1.) do you despise [PAI] the church of God 2.) [S] and humiliate [PAI] those who have [PAP] nothing?

What should I say [AAS] to you?

Should I praise [AAS] you?

I do not praise [PAI] you in this matter!

2) An instruction (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

[G] The reason is the Lord's Supper is the way of the Lord, [/] 1.) Jesus took bread, 2.) gave thanks, 3.) broke it, 4. and said, 1.) this is my body, 2.) you must do this in remembrance, [/] and likewise, 1.) he took the cup, 2.) and said, 1.) this is the new covenant in my blood, 2.) you must do this in remembrance, [G] because this is how you proclaim the Lord's death until His return.

[G] ²³ For I received [AAS] [from the Lord] what I also passed [AA] on to you:

[/] [On the night] when he was betrayed [IMI],

1.) the Lord Jesus took [AA] bread,

2.) [S] ²⁴ and when he had given thanks [AAP],

3.) broke it [AA],

4.) [S] and said [AA], 1.) “This is [PA] my body, which is [for you].

2.) Do [PAM] this [in remembrance of me].”

[/] ²⁵ In the same way also

1.) he took the cup, [after supper [AAN]],

2.) and said [PAP], 1.) “This cup is [PA] the new covenant [in my blood].

2.) Do [PAM] this, [I] as often as you drink [PAS] it, [in remembrance of me].”

[G] ²⁶ For as often as 1.) you eat [PAS] this bread 2.) [S] and drink [PAS] the cup,

you proclaim [PA] the Lord's death [until he comes [AAS]].

3) A warning (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

[I'] To take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is to sin, [P] So we must examine ourselves before we take the Lord's Supper, [P] else we will come under judgment, which is why many are sick and died, [C?] if we judged ourselves, [E] we would not be judged, [A] but when we're judged, [C] and disciplined by the Lord, [E] it's so we may be spared, [I'] so wait for one another, [E] so that when you come together you will not be judged.

[I'] ²⁷ So, then, whoever b.) eats [PAS] the bread

a.) [A] or drinks [PAS] the cup of the Lord [1Corinthians 11:23-26] in an unworthy manner [1Corinthians 11:17-22] will be [FMI] guilty of sin against 1.) the body 2.) [S] and blood of the Lord.

[P] ²⁸ Let a person examine [PAM] himself; [P] in this way let him 1.) eat [PAM] [the bread] 2.) [S] and drink [PAM] [from the cup].

[P] ²⁹ For whoever eats [PAP] and drinks [PAP] without recognising [PAP] the body, eats [PAI] and drinks [PAI] judgment on himself.

³⁰ This is why 1.) many are 1.) sick 2.) [S] and ill [among you], 2.) [S] and many have fallen asleep [PMI].

a.) [C?] ³¹ If we were properly judging [IAI] ourselves,

[E] we would not be judged [IMI],

b.) [A] ³² but when we are judged [PMP] [by the Lord], [C] we are disciplined [PMI],

[E] so that we may not be condemned [APS] [with the world].

[I'] ³³ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together [PMP] [to eat [AAN]], welcome [PMM] one another.

[C?] ³⁴ If anyone is hungry [PAI], he should eat at home,

[E] so that when you gather together [PMS] you will not come under judgment.

I will give instructions [FMI] about the other matters whenever I come [AAS].

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
 - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
 - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
 - [/] [/] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as...so).
 - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not...but).
 - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
 - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
 - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
 - [I'] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
 - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
 - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if...then, if, except...).
 - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
 - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
 - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
 - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
 - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
 - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
 - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- **Orange**: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- **Yellow**: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- **Green**: keywords.
- **Red**: repeated words.
- **Pink**: imperatives.
- **Blue**: main idea.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Preaching audience: Benoni Baptist Church, 35, married, two kids, need to be spiritually anchored.

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) *An outline*, b) *Tools*, c) *The emphasis*.

- a) 1) 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, Paul rebukes those that come together to selfishly eat their own supper not the Lord's Supper.
- 2) 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul instructs according to the Lord's words how the Lord's Supper is to be taken as a proclamation of the gospel.
- 3) 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, Paul warns that without self-examination and communal care the consequence will be covenantal judgment.
- b) I identified the text type as discourse. Tracked structural transitions by noting the dominant rhetorical purpose, noting the shift from rebuke (1 Corinthians 11:17-22) to instruction (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) to warnings (1 Corinthians 11:27-34). I noted the structural repetition of when you come together (in 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34) which sets the bookends of the pericope.
- c) Preserve unity when you come together to take the Lord's Supper because division is a poor gospel proclamation and invites judgement.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) *Literary*, b) *Historical*, c) *Cultural*, d) *Biblical*.

- a) 1 Corinthians 11:14 addresses corporate worship. Paul shifts from head coverings (1 Corinthians 11:2-16) into the Lord's Supper, and then to spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). This matters because Paul's exposing how current practice contradicts the self-giving logic of the cross.
- b) Paul spent 18 months establishing this church in Corinth, a bustling, strategic Roman colony filled with upwardly mobile freedmen, sailors, and merchants. Paul is responding to a letter from Corinth and a verbal report from Chloe's people (1 Corinthians 1:11) detailing dysfunctional in their corporate life. This matters because the Corinthians mistakenly believed they had already achieved spiritual maturity (1 Corinthians 4:8), making them indifferent to sin and social disparity.
- c) First-century meals were highly stratified. The wealthy host would invite social equals to sit in the dining room to eat premium food, while poorer slaves were relegated to the atrium with inferior rations. This matters because Paul's instruction upends Roman social norms. In the church, the cross levels all socio-economic hierarchies, as everyone eats the same bread, and drinks from the same cup, at the same time.
- d) Because 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 was written before Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, and Acts 2:42 there are no New Testament citations. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 alludes to Exodus 24:8, and is the fulfilment of the Passover. 1 Corinthians 11:25 alludes to Jeremiah 31:31-34, the sign of the New Covenant.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

Paul commands the Corinthians to stop divisions and examine themselves so the Lord's Supper will proclaim the gospel rather than invite judgment.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 explicitly declares the core of the gospel, Christ's substitutionary death and the inauguration of the New Covenant through His blood. The Lord's Supper is a visible sermon that establishes a vital dual-reality. First, the Vertical Anchor. By proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26), the meal points to a finished, objective work. For an audience needing to be spiritually anchored amidst the chaotic demands of mid-life, marriage, and parenting, the gospel offers an unshakeable identity rooted entirely in what Christ did for them (1 Corinthians 11:24), not in their own performance. Second, the Horizontal Architecture. The gospel is a status-shattering reality. Because everyone enters the New Covenant on the exact same basis, unmerited grace, the cross levels all human hierarchies. So, when the wealthy Corinthians marginalised the poor (1 Corinthians 11:21-22), they weren't breaking cultural etiquette. They were living out a functional denial of the cross. To fail to discern the body (1 Corinthians 11:29) is to try to enjoy vertical peace with God while maintaining horizontal pride toward His people. The gospel connects here as both the standard that exposes our status-seeking and the grace that binds our community together.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

At this table, the gospel that secures our identity must shatter our divisions.

6. What sermon title and preaching outline will you use to argue your main point?

- a) How the Lord's Supper shatters divisions
- b) 1) Look Out (1 Corinthians 11:17-22) – In a world of comfortable individualism, church is about uncomfortable community.
- 2) Look Up (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) – In the Lord's Supper the gospel levels the ground upon which we all stand.
- 3) Look In (1 Corinthians 11:27-34) – In our church our vertical relationship with God is on horizontal display.

7. How will you apply your main point for the good of your audience? a) *Believers*, b) *Unbelievers*.

- a) Before you take the Lord's Supper, resolve to proclaim the gospel in community with people who aren't the same as you, except for your common faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Over lunch today, make every effort to seek out, sit with, and converse with those who are different to you.
- b) Abandon the pursuit of status as an identity, and step into the family of God by trusting Christ. Stop waiting until your life is cleaned up, your marriage is fixed up, or your habits are reformed before you think you can belong. The Lord's Supper proclaims a death for the broken, not a trophy for the righteous. If you acknowledge your spiritual bankruptcy, you qualify for Christ today. Put your faith and trust in Him and receive His body and His blood.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. How has the author organised this passage?

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

7. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).
- 7) should flow from 5).