Recall that in this part of his letter Paul is responding to questions that the Corinthians have asked him by letter. (See the questions for lesson 33.) Chapters 7–15 comprise his response to their questions, and one problem we have interpreting his response is knowing when he is quoting their letter and when he is speaking as himself. For example, in chapter 10, verse 23 (and also in 6:12), Paul says, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient.” Many scholars have argued that when he says “all things are lawful for me,” he is not saying something that he believes. Instead, he is quoting from things that some in Corinth have said and to which he must respond. Some at Corinth have reasoned, “I am made free from the law by Christ’s sacrifice, so I can do anything I want.” In that case, the second part of the verse, “not all things are expedient [or profitable, something we should do],” is Paul’s response to their misunderstanding. (Notice how the JST recognizes the problem and makes sense of the passage.)

The Corinthians seem to have asked four major questions: (1) Given their expectation that the second coming was imminent, what was Paul’s advice about marriage (dealt with in chapter 7)? (2) Could a member of the Church eat meat that had previously been offered to idols, something forbidden by the Mosaic law (chapters 8–10 and
1 Corinthians 11

Verse 2: As the footnote in the LDS Bible indicates, the word translated *ordinances* in this verse could also have been translated *traditions*. That is almost certainly a better translation. How might the alternative translation help explain some of the oddities that follow in chapter 11? (Notice that Paul uses a related term, *custom*, at the end of the discussion of women wearing veils, 11:16.) The Greek word translated *ordinance* in verse 2 means “something handed down.” The word translated *custom* in verse 16 means “something shared,” “something that has become standard.”

Verses 4–7: As you can imagine, these verses have long been controversial. It isn’t easy to know what to make of them, so the temptation is to skip over them. Let’s consider them anyway, though we ought not to be surprised when after doing so we remain perplexed.

It is important to remember how little we know about customs in first-century eastern Mediterranean culture. We make inferences from some later documents. Because of the ravages of time, we try to see the whole through the very small keyhole provided by the documents that remain. But
anything we say has with it a degree of unknowability, and some things are quite uncertain. We are reasonably sure that Jewish custom of the day was for women to cover their hair when in public, but we are less sure what the Greek and Roman custom was. As a result, it is difficult to know what controversy Paul was responding to. Without knowing that, it is difficult to know how to understand his response. As we read these verses, we mustn’t forget that uncertainty.

Verse 7 teaches something that we don’t find in the Hebrew Bible, so we don’t know whether Paul is introducing a new teaching, whether he is telling people to abide by local custom, or something else. Do you have a guess as to which it is? Why do you think as you do?

Explain in your own words what verse 7 says. Is that something you believe? If so, how do you square that teaching with the 2 Nephi 26:33: “He [the Lord] doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female”? How can it be that the woman’s relationship to God is mediated by the man’s (as verse 7 appears to teach) yet the Lord invites men and women both to come to him?

**Verses 8–10:** In these verses Paul takes up a biblical argument. In verses 8–9 he tells us that the woman was made from the man, but not the reverse. Obviously he is thinking of the creation story in Genesis 2. So he concludes in verse 10 that the woman ought “to have power on her head because of the angels.”
Is Paul arguing that women deserve protection of some kind?

What does he mean when he says “because of the angels”?

How might Paul’s argument have been different had he referred to the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1:27 instead?

Verses 11–12: With what does the word nevertheless contrast? Is he now saying something like “You have believed X (which we saw in the preceding verses); nevertheless, I teach Y”? What would justify such a conclusion? What would undermine it?

The Greek word translated without means “outside of” or “separate from,” just as the English word can. What does it mean to say “neither is the man without the woman”? What would it mean to say the reverse, “the man is without the woman”?

What does “in the Lord” add to the meaning of verse 11? Does it explain what it means for man and woman to be together?

The end of verse 12 suggests that Paul is speaking of the creation: “all things of [i.e., created by] God.” Verse 8 used of that way when it said “man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” So verse 12 seems to say “as woman is created from man, even so is man also created by the woman, but all things are created by God.” What is Paul thinking when he says “man is also created by the woman”? Is it relevant that he says that woman is created from man?
and that man is created by woman? The different prepositions accurately represent differences in the Greek.

**Verses 17–19:** It appears that some early Christians celebrated the ordinance of the sacrament by having a meal together in commemoration of the Passover meal that Jesus ate with his disciples when he instituted the ordinance of the sacrament. Evidently this was the practice in Corinth. When Paul speaks of them “coming together,” he is speaking of them coming together to share that meal.

What is Paul’s complaint in verse 17? Do we ever come together at church “for the worse” rather than “for the better”? If we do, what causes that?

The words translated *divisions* (verse 18) and *heresies* (verse 19) are synonyms, and *heresies* is not a good translation. *Factions* would be better. How is the Corinthians’ problem with the sacrament related to the problem that Paul addressed in the beginning of this letter (1 Corinthians 1:10–13)? If there are factions, how can one avoid being part of them?

In verse 19 Paul seems to think that there is at least one good thing that comes from these factions. What is it? How would having factions do what Paul says it does? Could the factions in our midst have a similar effect? Would that mean that it would turn out that one faction would be the righteous faction and that the others would be proved wrong, or would factionalism somehow allow “they which are approved (in other words, shown to be genuine)” to be revealed apart from the factions?
**Verses 20–22:** They are coming together and they are eating, but why does Paul say in verse 20 they are nevertheless *not* partaking of the Lord’s Supper (the sacrament)?

What does he mean when he says “every one taketh before other his own supper” (verse 21)? What would a person have to be doing in order to become drunk at the Lord’s Supper?

What contrast is Paul creating when he says “*his own* supper”? How is it relevant that they have “houses to eat and to drink in” (verse 22)?

Do you think that Paul’s instruction here leads the Corinthians away from celebrating the Lord’s Supper as a communal meal and toward the more ritualistic celebration that, whatever the denominational differences, we would recognize as an ordinance?

**Verses 23–25:** Why does Paul feel that he needs to tell them how the ordinance of the sacrament began? How will re-calling this history help solve the problem in Corinth?

Scholars believe that in the material from the last half of verse 23 through verse 25 Paul is quoting from another source, one that he seems to have given the Corinthians earlier. Since 1 Corinthians is probably the oldest New Testament document that we have, Paul is quoting from some very early Christian text. So what?

What does Paul mean when he says, “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you” (verse 23)? Don’t we assume that he probably learned the ordinance when he was taught by Christians in Arabia, Damascus, and Tarsus before he began his work as an apostle (Acts 9:19, 30)?
Is the name Paul uses here, “the Lord Jesus,” significant? He could have chosen other names, so why this particular one? The Greek word translated Lord is kurios, one who is in charge because he possess something or someone, a master. Is that relevant? Does Paul’s testimony in Galatians 2:20 explain his use of Master?

Why is it important to the story of the sacrament that Jesus instituted it “the same night in which he was betrayed” (verse 23)? Another translation of the word translated betrayed is handed over.

Mark and Matthew tell us that Jesus blessed the bread; Paul says he gave thanks. Is that difference significant? If it is, what does it tell us about how each is thinking about the event?

In Greek nouns and pronouns have gender. As a result, one way to tell which pronouns refer to which nouns is to see which ones correspond in gender. Masculine nouns are referred to with masculine pronouns. In verse 24 the pronoun translated this in the phrase “this is my body” is neuter. In English the pronoun seems to refer to the word bread, but that Greek word is masculine, so it isn’t the referent. The closest neuter noun is body, which follows almost immediately. Is that the referent, or does the pronoun refer to something else?

The basic sense of the word translated do in verse 24 (poie) is “to produce something.” Do is a good translation, but what kind of deeper meaning might the broader sense add?

If we are to eat the sacramental meal “in remembrance” of the Savior (verse 24), what is it that we should remember? How do we remember? The phrase “in remembrance” seems
to be a repetition of an Old Testament phrase, as in Leviticus 24:7, where it is translated “be a memorial.” Does that shed light on what we are asked to do at the sacrament table?

In verses 25, why does Jesus say that the cup is the new covenant (“new testament” in the King James Version)? He didn’t say that about the bread. Is that significant?

Was Jesus referring to Jeremiah 31:31–34 when he spoke of a new covenant? Does that reference answer some of the questions that the Corinthians have?

What significance do you see in Jesus saying, “This cup is the testament covenant in my blood” (italics added)? Is that an implicit reference to Exodus 24:8? Is Leviticus 17:14 relevant?

**Verse 26:** The word translated *shew* means “proclaim.” When we take the sacrament, how are we proclaiming the Lord’s death? Is Paul’s point related to the fact that he preaches “the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18)?

Why does Paul add “till he come”? Does he mean that the sacrament will no longer be needed after Christ returns? If so, why not? If not, what else can he mean?

**Verses 27–28:** The Greek word translated *unworthily* is the negative form of a word meaning “worthy,” just as is our English word. The Greek word meaning “worthy” originally meant “weighty” or “valuable,” which suggests that to be unworthy is not to be weighty or not to be concerned with weighty things. Given that, how might we understand what it means to take the sacrament unworthily? How do we take it worthily?
Does this way of thinking about worthiness offer a different perspective on what it means to be a worthy person, something other than thinking of that in terms of keeping rules?

What have the Corinthians been doing that made them unworthy?

If we take the sacrament unworthily, why are we “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”? We will be held responsible for the death of Jesus Christ! What does that mean? Is Paul being hyperbolic?

Verse 28 enjoins those who take the sacrament to examine themselves, to put themselves to the test, to take stock and determine their genuineness. Self-deception is so easy. How do we avoid self-deception when we perform this self-examination?

Verses 33–34: Is Paul merely correcting the way that the Corinthian Saints had practiced the sacramental meal or is he abolishing the practice?

1 Corinthians 13

This is perhaps the most famous chapter in the New Testament. There are good reasons for that, but one consequence is that we often read it as if on automatic pilot, understanding the chapter through the things we’ve heard said about it rather than directly from itself. So to understand this chapter better, ask yourself why Paul writes this in response to the Corinthians’ question about gifts of the Spirit. In other words, how is chapter 13 related to chapter 12, particularly to 12:31: “But covet earnestly the best gifts:
and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way”? And how is what he teaches in chapter 13 related to what he says at the beginning of chapter 14: “Follow after [i.e., seek] charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy”? (Don’t forget what Paul said about prophecy in 13:2, 8.) Asking the same question another way: why does Paul interrupt his discussion of spiritual gifts (chapters 12 and 14) with this independent discourse on Christian love?

Some have referred to this as a hymn or psalm. Though it is highly structured rhetorically, a beautifully written passage, it is nevertheless prose rather than poetry.

The Wisdom of Solomon, one of the deuterocanonical books of the Bible (one of those books that Protestants refer to as “the Apocrypha”) has a similar list of the attributes of wisdom. If you have access to that work (it is available online), compare Wisdom 7:22–8:1 (especially Wisdom 7:22–23) with this chapter. Assume that Paul’s listeners were familiar with that passage from Wisdom. What would Paul’s list of the virtues of charity teach in that comparison?

**Verses 1–3:** Paul is using hyperbole when he says, “Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels,” but what point is he making with that hyperbole? How would you paraphrase what he says in that clause?

Why is each of the actions named here nothing without charity? How is charity different from giving to the poor (verse 3)?

“Though I give my body to be burned” is another Pauline text that is mysterious to us. Some assume that Paul is per-
haps talking about martyrdom by fire. In any case, Paul is talking about extreme self-sacrifice.

**Verses 4–7:** What does it mean to be long-suffering (verse 4)? We use the word *patient* as a synonym, which means “passive” or “waiting.” What does *long-suffering* connote? (Remember that in King James English, *suffering* didn’t necessarily mean that one felt pain; it meant that one endured or allowed something.)

What is envy or jealousy, and why is it inimical to love? How do we vaunt ourselves (brag)? What is wrong with doing so? Why is it incompatible with love? What is the problem with being puffed up? Does Paul’s teaching about Christian wisdom help us see why bragging and pride are forbidden by love? (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:29–31.)

What is unseemly behavior (verse 5)? (See the footnote in the LDS scriptures.) Why would unseemly behavior make one unloving?

What does it mean to seek one’s own, in other words, to seek one’s own advantage? Can you give examples? What’s wrong with seeking the advantage? Isn’t that what our social and economic systems require? If it does, how can we avoid doing what is contrary to charity?

We could replace *thinketh* in “thinketh no evil” with the word *calculates* and we would improve the translation. When would a person calculate evil?

In verses 6, what does it mean to rejoice in iniquity?
When do *we* do that? Here is another translation of verse 7: “It keeps all confidences, maintains all faithfulness, all hope, all steadfastness.” What do you think of saying “keeps all confidences” instead of “bears all things”? Which fits Paul’s teaching better? Another, fairly literal translation is “covers all things.” What do you think of that translation? If you think that the King James Version makes more sense, can you explain what it means to bear all things? Think about Paul’s teaching and try to make your own “translation” of verse 7.

**Verses 8–11:** Why is charity eternal when the gifts of the Spirit are not?

What is perfect or complete (verse 10; the two words mean the same thing in Paul)? What is incomplete?

**Verse 12:** What promise does Paul make in this verse? Could that promise also be a warning?

**Verse 13:** What word could you substitute for *abideth* without changing the meaning of this verse?

Why is charity greater than either faith or hope? Can you explain how that teaching accords with Paul’s insistence that he preaches Christ crucified?