



# HAIR, HATS, AND HEADSHIP

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## OPENING COMMENT

Our passage this week is wrought with some challenging imagery, curious statements, and difficult truths. Yet, the passage itself is simple to understand. Our challenge is to remove the cultural presuppositions we hold and see what Paul was teaching to the Corinthian church before we wrestle with the difficulties it reveals in our world. Once we clearly understand Paul we can then contemplate how to best stay faithful to Paul's instruction to humble submission, first to Christ, and then to the created order.

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## READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

<sup>2</sup> Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, <sup>5</sup> but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. <sup>6</sup> For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. <sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; <sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man



wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, <sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What is Paul aiming for the Corinthian church to understand in this passage? (vs. 3)
2. Compare and contrast verses 4 and 5, particularly the instructions to men (4) and women (5). What are the differences? What are the similarities? Why is this significant?
3. Why is the head covering important in the cultural setting? (vs. 6)
4. Verses 7 - 10 outline why a man should not wear a head covering as well as why a woman should wear a head covering. What are Paul's reasons? (vs. 7b, 8, 9)
5. Verses 11 and 12 act as a counterbalance to avoid misapplication of Paul's instruction to the church. What is his point in these verses?
6. Paul appeals to "nature" in verse 14, which is his way of pointing to a natural distinction between the sexes that play out in different cultural contexts. What then can we learn from verse 14 and 15 about how Paul understands the role hair plays in the culture?
7. Verse 16 is an interesting conclusion to Paul's argument. He has very little patience for those who are "contentious" around this issue. This verse expands the scope of his argument beyond the Corinthian context. How far does he go?

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. How does God being the head of Christ and Christ being the head of man temper the conversation around authority and submission?
2. Although there are certain aspects of the text that can be confusing (i.e. shaven heads, "because of the angels", Paul's appeal to nature) the main point is still clear. Paul is teaching that there is a prescribed order of authority from God through to woman. Does this provide comfort or discomfort for you? Why?
3. Paul affirms an equality between men and women (both can pray and prophesy in verse 4 and 5, they are interdependent in verse 11 and 12) without removing role distinction. How is this position counter-cultural?
4. Paul grounds his argument in the creation account of Genesis 2 (vs. 8,9). Why is it important to recognize the foundations of Paul's argument in a pre-fallen world?
5. How might we, in today's culture, show honour, humility, and rightful submission to those in Godly authority over us?



6. Where do we fail to uphold the equality side of the argument Paul makes in the text? How might we do a better job at reinforcing equality without compromising the biblical truth of headship?

## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 2 - creation account of man and woman.
2. Ephesians 5:22-33 - marital relationship dynamics governed by Christ love for the church.
3. Philippians 2:1-11 - Christ, equal with God, submits and humbles himself to death.
4. 1 Timothy 2:8-15 - Paul reiterates to Timothy the submission sought after.
5. 1 Peter 2:13-25 - Be subject to those in authority because of Christ's example.

## CONCLUSION

Paul is very clear that the Genesis account is best understood to show God's intention of specific roles for males and females. Yet, he is also very aware of the abuses that can be justified should one take "authority" too far. So, he remains true to the creation account of Eve created as a helper for Adam, but ensures that all understand the neither is superior. The cultural context will determine how this looks, but the underlying truths cannot be dismissed as a cultural anomaly. Our job is to wrestle with how we remain true to God's creative work of creating man and woman equal in value and distinct in role, without compromising either truth. This path will require significant grace and a spirit of self-sacrifice regardless of the gender one holds.

## SHARE & PRAY

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### LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

