

Bobbed Hair

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice's sermon emphasizes the biblical significance of hair length as a symbol of authority and femininity, urging women to embrace their God-given roles.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 22:5, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 3:7

Topics: "Gender Roles", "Biblical Submission"

Description

John R. Rice preaches on the importance of men and women embracing their God-given differences, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 11:3-15. He emphasizes that men and women have distinct roles and appearances, with men symbolizing their authority by having short hair and women symbolizing their submission with long hair. Rice highlights the significance of these symbolic gestures in honoring God's design for gender distinctions and the importance of women embracing their femininity and submission to authority.

Transcript

1Corinthians 11:3-15 tells us that since the man is the head of the woman, and there is a fundamental difference between men and women, that difference should be symbolized in the ways men and women wear their hair.

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head ...

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. ... For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. ...

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

Throughout the Bible it is stressed that men and women are different. A man is not like a woman. A woman is not like a man. It is a sin for a woman to try to appear like a man. God has one place for a man and a different place for a woman. For this cause, in Deut. 22:5 we are commanded: "A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so

are abomination unto the Lord thy God." It is a sin for women to appear masculine. It is equally a sin for men to appear effeminate. In fact, 1 Cor. 6:9 names some of the unrighteous that "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And among the adulterers and fornicators and drunkards and thieves and covetous and extortioners, God put the effeminate. To be effeminate is a horrible sin in God's sight. And the first sin with which God chided Adam, after the fall, was this:

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife..."

I say, God has given man one position and woman another position and this difference in their position should be shown by men having short hair and women long hair. "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven" (1 Cor. 11:4,5). And verse 6 continues: "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

Man is made in the image of God. God is a masculine God. The masculine pronoun is used of God everywhere in the Bible. That foolish and unscriptural title given by a woman preacher, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, "Our Father-Mother God," dishonors God. God is not effeminate. God is not feminine, but masculine. And man is made in the image of God. On the other hand, a woman is not made so much in the image of God, but in the image and as a mate to man. So the Scripture says: "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man."

Blessed is the woman that remembers this; her glory is in being a help to a man, and in submission to her husband or her father. And long hair is the mark of this submission, the mark of this femininity.

A man should not pray or prophesy with his head covered. That would dishonor his head, says the Scripture. Men instinctively know that it is shameful to wear hats in public service, and reverent men remove their hats when they pray. Likewise, men instinctively know that they ought not to have long hair. A man has short hair, and this symbolizes the fact that he can approach Jesus Christ freely and that he takes the responsibility as the head of his home.

On the other hand, a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. Now look at verse 15 and you will see plainly that God is not talking about a woman wearing a hat or veil. Verse 15 says: "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." A woman, when she prays, should have a covering, some symbol that marks her as an obedient and surrendered wife or daughter. Her long hair is given her for a covering, and a woman who does not have her head covered in that way dishonors her head. And verse 6 says that it is a shame for a woman to be shorn, and she ought to be covered. This symbolic covering or veil for a woman is long hair. Long hair is a mark of a woman's womanliness in God's sight, and is plainly given her for that express purpose, as verse 15 says.

New Testament ceremonial symbols

Some people think that there are no religious ceremonial symbols for New Testament Christians, but they are wrong as just a moment's thought will show you. Baptism is a precious ceremony, picturing the burial and resurrection of our Saviour. It pictures also that the believer in Christ is counted dead with Christ and is raised up to live a new life. It pictures also the blessed hope of the resurrection from the dead, when all

the bodies of the saints will come out of the graves. Baptism pictures a precious truth and is so important in its doctrinal teaching that it must not be ignored.

Likewise, the Lord's Supper or Memorial Supper of bread and the fruit of the vine pictures the broken body and the spilled blood of our Saviour, and the Lord Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." The Christian thus by partaking of the bread and grape juice pictures the fact that he has partaken of the body and blood of the Lord by trusting Him for salvation.

In ordination of ministers and deacons, the ordaining council or presbytery lays hands on the head of the candidates, symbolizing that these are to receive authority from God, and more than that, that they need to receive and should receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

James 5:16 tells us that the elders of the church are to be called in cases of sickness and are to anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord and that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Oil symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit, whose miracle-working power we have a right to claim when God gives the faith for it.

Thus you see that New Testament Christians have a number of symbols, ceremonies which have a precious and holy meaning. And we must add to this list the symbol of short hair for men, and long hair for women. Men wear short hair as a sign that they assume their responsibilities as made in the image of God and as rulers over their households. Women are to wear long hair to symbolize their submission to husband and father, taking their place with meekness as women surrendered to the will of God and subject to the authority God places over them.

Because of the angels

In the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians we find a remarkable teaching which ought to stir the heart of every woman. The Lord says, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." The word power here means authority. A woman ought to have a symbol of her husband's authority or her father's authority on her head. That is, a woman should wear long hair to indicate that she is submissive to the authority God has put over her. And this special reason mentioned here for a woman having long hair is that angels look on, and for their sakes a woman needs to have long hair.

The angels of God are all about us. People often think of angels as remaining in Heaven and only coming to earth on rare occasions to bring some message. But that is not true. The chief business of the angels is on earth, not in Heaven. Heb. 1:13,14 shows that the angels are not sitting on the right hand of God but "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The angels are ministering spirits, sent to wait on us who will one day fully inherit our salvation.

Angels appeared to Jacob on a ladder reaching from Heaven, as the young man slept with his head on a stone, and "behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Angels whose work is on earth ascend to Heaven evidently to make report, but they descend again to take up their work. When Elisha, the prophet of God, was at Dothan, unseen to other eyes the angels of God made a ring of fire around the city with their "horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings 6:17). The Lord Jesus says about little children, that "their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). And Psa. 34:7 says that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

So angels are all round about us. And they are surpassingly concerned about our lives. Our eyes are blinded! We think that the other world, the unseen world and spirit beings are far, far away, but that is not

true. And how angels do listen when a woman kneels to pray! For the sake of angels who always are near, Christian women should especially be careful to have long hair--"because of the angels," the Scripture says.

How are angels concerned about a woman's hair? I think that not only would angels be grieved by this mark of rebellion against husband or father and against God, but angels would be tempted, likewise, to rebel.

We know that some angels are fallen. I understand the Bible to teach that Satan himself was Lucifer, an archangel who became ambitious and rebellious and said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (Isa. 14:13). He wanted to be like God (Isa. 14:14), and was not willing to be subject, just as many women want to be equal to their husbands instead of being subject to them. And Satan fell. So a great group of angels fell, too. Rev. 12:4 may suggest that a third of the angels fell. I do not know how many. But actually, these angels are now chained in darkness, awaiting judgment (2 Pet. 2:4). Angels can fall, and in the past angels have fallen into sin.

This is especially sad when we remember that Christ never became an angel and did not die for angels. There is nothing said in the Bible about the redemption of fallen angels. If God has any plans for saving angels, He has not revealed them to us.

What sins did angels commit when they fell? They did not get drunk. They did not commit adultery, for it seems that angels are sexless beings who neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 23:30). We suppose that heavenly angels, accustomed to the beauty and glory of Heaven, are never covetous. No, the sin of angels is the sin of rebellion.

Thus, when a woman with bobbed hair and a rebellious heart comes to pray, angels who are near and see her head and see her heart are tempted to sin; are tempted to commit the sin which such women commit, the sin of rebellion against authority. Because of the angels, every woman should wear long hair and be careful that she does not have a rebellious heart lest she should be a curse to the angels God has sent to be our ministers and guardians.

From this Scripture it becomes evident how hateful is the symbol of bobbed hair to God. And how it reveals the stubborn self-will of the modern woman who is no longer willing to take the place God assigned to godly women. I beseech the reader that if you are a woman you consider how God must feel toward this mark of rebellion, bobbed hair. No wonder that 1 Cor. 11:5 says that every woman with a bobbed head has a dishonoured head. And 1 Cor. 11:6 says that it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven and that she ought to have a covering. And 1 Cor. 11:15 says that long hair is given her for this covering.

Long hair, the glory of a woman

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." (1 Cor. 11:11-15)

Let no woman be discouraged because God insists that she shall take a place of subjection and wear the mark of humility and femininity on her head. It is true that the man was created first and then woman created second as a helpmeet, as we were told in verses 8 and 9 above. But dear woman, be not grieved. Long hair is not a shameful mark. Rather, it is a mark of glory. God did not mean for the man to be without the woman (v. 11). Both are necessary. Each one is a complement for the other. Each is dependent upon the other. And God's way is the fitting and beautiful and happy way.

Since the meaning is made clear in this passage, I suggest that you take heed to verse 13: "Judge ye in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" If bobbed hair means rebellion, if it means a sinful disregarding of a woman's place, if it flaunts that rebellion in the face of the angels of God and tempts them to sin, if it means that a woman is trying to be masculine and is giving up her feminine beauty, then doesn't even nature itself teach you that it is comely for a man to have short hair and a woman to have long hair? And isn't it clear, as verses 14 and 15 say, that long hair for a man is a shame, but for a woman, it is a glory to her?

If women only knew the charm and beauty of long hair to intelligent men and the reverence it inspires for godly women, they would never cut their hair.

I look back with the tenderest emotion to the vision of my mother, even on her bed in her last sickness, when long braids of black hair lay on her pillow beside her head. It is sweet to believe that I will see my mother again, as a womanly woman with beautiful long hair. I remember with what pride I saw my bride take down her long hair and brush it. To me even then, though I did not know the Scriptures on this subject, long hair was a symbol of something holy and beautiful in women, something tender and pure. Long hair in any woman makes her appear more womanly, and there is a sweet and pure charm for men in the feminine beauty of long hair.

One of the most touching stories in the Bible is that given in Luke 7:37,38:

"And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

How Jesus seems to have delighted in having His feet wiped with the long hair of this woman's head. The Lord Jesus forgave and saved this woman, but she could never have given this beautiful mark of her devotion and surrender and love, drying her tears from His feet with her hair, if she had been a modern woman with bobbed hair. Don't you think this story shows the Saviour was pleased with her long hair? I can imagine that even after the Saviour was crucified, this woman, saved from a life of sin, would brush her long hair happily and remember that with it she had had the joy of wiping the feet of the Saviour the day her sins were forgiven.

I well remember knowing one lost man who scorned the attempts of a number of loved ones to talk to him about his poor, lost soul but who listened with most reverent respect to his sister-in-law, because she had long hair and he believed her to be the modest and pure-hearted woman that her hair indicated. He did not know the Scriptures, but he knew instinctively that God meant for a woman to be womanly. Just as crude and unlettered men seem to know they should take off their hats when they enter public worship or when people pray, so they likewise instinctively know that women, to keep their place as modest and feminine women, should have long hair.

Many a woman feels this though she cannot put it in words. I suppose that literally scores of women have told me how, when they heeded the dictates of fashion and finally had their long hair cut off, they looked in the mirror and wept inconsolably at their loss. And well they might! The Bible says that long hair is a woman's glory and to have it shorn is her shame and dishonors her head.

The modern woman wonders why now she must chase a beau down, as her mother never did. The modern woman wonders why men do not rise up on the bus or streetcar to give her a seat. The modern woman wonders why some men feel so free to curse in her presence, and to use language that no respectable woman of the past generation ever heard. Yes, the modern, masculine, pants-wearing, cigarette-smoking, bobbed-haired woman has fallen from her pedestal. She is not revered by men as her beautiful and modest mother was.

These days men have come to feel that if a woman will not fill a woman's place, she shall not have a woman's protection and respect. Men desert their wives as never before in the world. Very few men nowadays feel reverently about a woman's body. Boys who have dates with these bobbed-haired, smoking, strong-willed, modern girls, expect to kiss them and fondle them as they please, or to kick them out of the car to walk home. The man who marries a modern woman marries a woman who expects to vote like a man, smoke like a man, have her hair cut like a man, and go without restrictions and without chaperons and obey nobody. A man who marries such a woman, I say, does not expect to support her. The modern girl is very often expected to work and help make a living.

In 1 Pet. 3:7 husbands are commanded to give "honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." When women cease to admit that they are the weaker vessels as God's Word says they are, then they lose this honor that men through the centuries have delighted to give to women. I say, the honor, the deference, the courtesy, the protectiveness that practically all men, good and bad, once offered to good women, has almost disappeared!

Oh, women, what have you lost when you lost your femininity! When you bobbed your hair, you bobbed your character, too. Your rebellion against God's authority as exercised by husband and father, has a tendency, at least, to lose you all the things that women value most. If you want reverence and respect from good men, if you want protection and a good home and love and steadfast devotion, then I beg you to take a woman's place! Dress like a woman, not like a man. Have habits like a woman. And if you want God to especially bless you when you pray, then have on your head a symbol of the meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of such great price.

Is it a sin for little girls to have bobbed hair? The Bible does not separately discuss that question as far as I know. But a girl should be subject to her father and should have the "symbol of authority" on her head. In our own home I felt that since my girls would grow to be women, they had better begin to feel like women and act like women. So all of my six daughters have long hair. And how beautiful it is! And when the matter is settled while they are young, and the character is fixed into the lines of womanly behavior and womanly thought and ideals, then I do not expect a great clash and struggle after they are women. Why should not girls be taught that long hair is a glory, as God has said? Why should they not revel in the thought of being women, wives and mothers? Though the Bible gives no separate teaching about girls, it implies clearly that the same rules would apply. For instance, Numbers chapter 30 mentions a daughter's responsibility to her father along with a wife's responsibility to her husband.

"If any man seem to be contentious"

This passage on bobbed hair, 1 Cor. 11:1-6, ends with this statement:

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

On the matter of submitting to authority, there are frequently those who "seem to be contentious." Self-will dies hard, even in a Christian. We want our own way. Some of the Christians who were servants and slaves thought that now they were Christians they need not obey their masters. And children felt that now they were saved, they were equal to their parents. Citizens felt that they now need not obey their heathen rulers, and wives naturally felt themselves equal to their husbands. Were they not saved just the same way? Were not all members of the body of Christ alike? But to such people the Lord plainly gave command as you see in Colossians 3:18-25, Ephesians 5:22-6:9, and elsewhere. No doubt some wives wanted now to cut their hair and act like men. And perhaps some men encouraged it. Some men do now. But to all such Paul said, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." No custom of bobbed hair was allowed for women in New Testament churches. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, who had more to do with founding churches and their control than any other man who lived, plainly said that this custom was never recognized and never allowed. Bobbed hair is unscriptural, and the idea of it was utterly repugnant to New Testament Christianity.

After all, dear woman, if you are a Christian, if you love the Lord Jesus, if you acknowledge Him as the Master of your life, then His command ought to settle the whole question. To please Him, trusting Him to make it worth while, I would start out to be the kind of woman that this Scripture pictures. I would, with a surrendered heart, submit myself to the authority God has placed over me, whether of husband or father. I would have a symbol of my femininity on my head, long hair picturing my submission to the will of God. When I prayed, I would not be a temptation to the angels nor an affront to God. And I would have the glory, the feminine beauty, that every true and godly woman has when she is wholly submitted to the will of God and when that pure heart and meek and lovely spirit are indicated in the way such a woman dresses and speaks and lives and wears her hair.

Is it really hard to decide when you know exactly what the Bible says you ought to do?

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