

# Head-Coverings in Worship Part 1

by Milton Vincent

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*This sermon explores the biblical teaching on head coverings, emphasizing the importance of men not covering their heads when ministering publicly and women covering their heads as a reflection of the structure of relationships in God's economy.*

**Duration:** 1:00:47

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:2

**Topics:** "Head Coverings"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of head coverings in worship based on the passage in 1 Corinthians. He acknowledges that this passage is controversial and difficult to interpret. The preacher emphasizes the need for careful attention and open-mindedness when studying Paul's arguments and flow of thought. He also mentions that his sermon is not meant to be the final word on the matter, but rather an initial contribution to a church-wide conversation.

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## Transcript

Well, good morning. I have a few helpers that hopefully are in position to assist with this, but there's a handout for the message this morning. You guys can go ahead and get up and do your work.

It's our speed distribution team. And just if you don't end up getting one, just raise your hand and they'll get one to you. But let me invite you this morning to turn in your Bibles to First Corinthians, chapter 11, First Corinthians, chapter 11.

For those of you that are visiting with us, we're doing a verse by verse study through the book of First Corinthians. And as we continue in our study of this most amazing book, we come this morning to First Corinthians, chapter 11, verse two. And my goal throughout the length of this morning and this evening is to cover verses two through 16.

Vernon needs one up here on the front row. First Corinthians, chapter 11, verses two through 16. You guys excited about today? Yeah, me too.

Someone asked me this morning, are you preaching on the passage today? And I said, yeah. Also, last night, my son was sitting in the living room in front of me playing with his PlayStation and someone in the family brought up the sermon for this morning. And Brendan turns around, he's my 10 year old son, and he

turns around, he goes, you're preaching the hat sermon tomorrow? And and I said, yeah.

And he goes, yeah. And I said, well, what are you so excited about? You're not a girl. And he said, but I I'm anxious to know what you're going to say.

So I know my son's excited about it, and I am, too, just to see how this day is going to go. I've spent about a solid month of preparing to handle this passage that is just fraught with numerous interpretive difficulties, along with the applicational difficulties that I think you'll become very aware of throughout the length of today. As we go along, but as you see on your handout, the title of the message this morning is head coverings in worship, head coverings in worship.

Now, especially if you're visiting with us or you're new with us, please understand what we're going to be talking about this morning and tonight is not the kind of thing we normally talk about. But we're doing a verse by verse study through the book of First Corinthians. We made that decision about a year and four or five months ago.

And we're just taking it a verse at a time. And we have concluded our study of chapter 10 and even chapter 11, verse one. And next up is this passage, verses two through 16.

And so we need to face it squarely and to see all that God has for us through it. This is a passage that is shrouded in a lot of controversy, although certain things everyone agrees are certainly true about this passage. And I think you'll become aware of that as we go on throughout the length of today.

But I do ask that all of you just gird up the loins of your mind and really be prepared to pay attention. Some of Paul's arguments and his flow of thought is bewildering at times. He uses as arguments things that we're not really even accustomed to thinking about today.

And some of his argumentation may at first make you kind of squirm a little bit. In fact, it made me feel a little uncomfortable and especially preaching. And it's like, what is he saying here? And then once you identify what he's saying, it's like, how do I say this in a way that I'm not saying more than what I know for sure that he's saying? And you'll actually hear me this morning say regarding one particular thing that he says, I have no idea what he means by this, but I want us to just do the best that we can to understand this passage of Scripture that the Lord has set before us.

And just so you know what we'll be doing today this morning, my goal is to simply do exegesis. And what I mean by that is to just walk through verses two through 16 and try to explain and understand what it is that Paul is saying and how his first century audience would have understood it. All right.

That's going to be our obsession this morning. And then tonight we'll deal with the application of practical side of things. And the title of the message tonight is our head coverings for today.

If you came this morning thinking you'll find the answer to that question, you'll be disappointed. But you need to come back tonight where we will seek to answer that question. But if we're going to answer that question, we've got to do our exegesis first.

Right. You study the scripture, see what it says, and then you start dealing with application. And also just one other thing before we dive into our passage for this morning, I want you to know that I do not view what I'm going to be saying this morning and tonight as the final word, even from me on this matter.

I would rather like to view what I'm going to be doing today is as making an initial contribution to what I hope will be a churchwide and elder wide conversation about this. I don't intend to settle the matter entirely by the end of today to where this is what I have to say about it. This is what God's word says.

Now, go out and and I'm going to leave it to you to apply it. I want it to be seen as kind of a contribution to what will be an ongoing discussion. I want us as elders to talk about this passage in our next elders meeting and beyond that and to sort through what we are unanimous on regarding what it says and and the application of it to us today and in this church.

And I want you guys in your homes and your marriages to be talking about this and really assessing what Paul is saying and the application of it and what kind of decisions you guys may be coming to. And you can express those to me and to the other elders. And let's have a loving, gracious, humble and earnest conversation about this passage.

And then at a later point, before we leave First Corinthians, I will come back and I will speak on this subject again and try to give expression to where we are as an elder board on this passage and also to try to give expression to where we as a church body are on this matter and how we would like to go about applying this. OK, fair enough. Fair enough.

OK. As I said, I've spent about a month on this passage. I've gone through sixty one commentaries.

Some of them are just commentaries on the whole book of First Corinthians. Others are scholarly journals, journal articles that have been written sometimes on a single word, just the word for in verse 15. There's a whole article on just that one preposition, the word head and verse three.

There's a lot of controversy about that word head. And there's a whole articles that are written on that. There's just numerous, a lot of literature on this subject.

And it's been pretty sobering just sorting through all of that. But anyway, hopefully some of that will become evident today as we go through the passage and then deal with the applicational side of things tonight. But anyway, if you look at your handout, if you want a very succinct statement about what it is that Paul's point is in this passage, you find it here at the top of the handout.

And that is this Paul's primary point in First Corinthians 11, verses two through 16 is this. Men should not cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Women should cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

Nobody disagrees on this, although some commentators are uncomfortable with that being the focus. They say, you know what, you know, Paul's not really teaching a practice here. He's trying to teach principles.

But I would differ with that. I mean, Paul is teaching a practice here and everything he says by way of principle and theological truth, everything he says in verses two through 16 all goes towards supporting this point in this passage. And that is that men should not have a covering over their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

However, it's different for women. Women should cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. That is Paul's point to his first century audience at the Church of Corinth.

Now, in making this point, as you see on your handout, Paul makes five arguments to show them why they need to heed his instruction on head coverings. And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. But let's begin in verse two and see how he introduces this.

He says, now, I praise you because you remember me in everything. You remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions or the ordinances just as I delivered them to you. Paul begins with the word of praise.

That is kind of surprising in light of how he's been attacking them and rebuking them. And even in the following verses in this section and then in the second half of chapter 11, Paul's going to be correcting them. It's kind of strange that he praises them.

Yet the indication you get is that it seems like the majority of the people in the Corinthian church were holding to this particular tradition of the head covering, that most men were not covering their heads and most women were covering their heads in the context of public ministry. And so Paul commends the majority of them. He's saying, you guys, you're remembering me and everything and giving consideration to what I taught.

You're holding firmly to the tradition, to the apostolic body of teaching that I've given you just as I delivered them to you when I was with you five years ago. Now, what that implies is that when Paul was among the Corinthians five years earlier and planning the church, there would have been a time where he sat down with them and he taught them about the issue of head coverings and he would have taught them that, man, you're not supposed to wear a head covering whenever you minister publicly in any capacity. Women, you need to wear a head covering when you minister publicly in any capacity.

So he would have orally instructed them about this. And now he is commending, in verse two, the majority of them for holding fast to that particular teaching. However, when you pick up in verse three and move beyond that, it becomes evident that at the very least, there was a minority in the Corinthian church of men and women who were disregarding Paul's instruction regarding head coverings, that there were some men who were actually putting head coverings on.

And there were women who were throwing their head coverings off when they're praying publicly, prophesying or whatever, ministering publicly. They're throwing their head coverings off and behaving like a man in their attire and in their dress. And so Paul begins in verse three to correct the minority of those in the Corinthian church who were disregarding his tradition, his oral teaching on this subject.

Now, look what he says in verse three. And this is where we begin to look at his arguments. In fact, if you're filling in the blanks in the handout, his first argument to them as to why they need to heed his instruction and his traditional teaching regarding the head coverings is this because of the structure of relationships in God's economy, because of the structure of relationships in God's economy.

Look how he begins in verse three. He says, but but I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man and the man is the head of a woman and God is the head of Christ. There's four individuals, as it were, that are involved in this hierarchy here, and that is God the father.

We would understand him as God. The father is the head of Jesus Christ. In other words, he is the authority for Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has arranged himself underneath the authority of his father. We see that indicated even in eternity past. Jesus submitted himself to the commission of his father to come into the world and to die for the sins of sinful man.

When Jesus was here in his incarnate state, he lived his life in obedience and in subjection to his heavenly father, even in eternity future. And first Corinthians 15:28, I believe Paul tells us that at that point in the future, Jesus will hand all things over to the father and subject himself to him. So this subjection of Jesus to the father is something from eternity past and also in his incarnation and in eternity future.

Now, by the way, this is Jesus inferior to the father. No, he's not inferior to the father in his essence, telling us right away that we're not talking about inferiority and superiority, that whoever is over whom automatically means that they must be superior individuals. That's not what he's talking about.

We know he can't be talking about that because Jesus is under the headship of his father. And we know, according to the doctrine of the Trinity that is affirmed in Scripture, that the second member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, is equal to his father. Nonetheless, he submits himself to his father voluntarily and arranges himself underneath the authority and the headship of his father.

Paul then says Christ is the head of every man. In other words, every man, at least every Christian man, is to arrange himself underneath the headship of Jesus Christ. He relates to Jesus Christ as an authority figure.

Yes, Jesus is a friend. Yes, he is a companion. Yes, he is a shepherd and a million other things.

But he is also an authority figure. And so a man living in obedience to God's word and God's structure of relationships in his universe arranges himself underneath the headship, the authority of Jesus Christ in his life. And then Paul says, and the man and this could be translated the husband.

He doesn't say and men are the head of women. He doesn't use the plural there. He says the man and this could be translated the husband in the home, in the marriage relationship.

Paul says the husband is the head of a wife. Now, what he's saying by that is that he is an authority figure in his wife's life. The wife, if she is to obey scripture, is to submit to her husband, to his headship.

She is to arrange herself underneath the leadership, the authority and the headship of her husband in the home. And it also means that she relates to her husband as an authority figure in her life. Now, folks, I'm not saying this.

God is OK. And my job is to proclaim the scripture. You may be sitting here this morning saying, man, Milton, I don't like you very much because I don't like what you're saying.

Well, at least understand that all I'm doing is telling you what God says. And I don't apologize for that at all. This is the way it is, whether we like this or not.

The father is the head of Jesus Christ. Christ is the head of every man. And in the marriage relationship, the man, the husband is the head of the wife.

And so in the marriage relationship, that headship always needs to be kept in mind. And the wife genuinely is to relate to her husband as an authority figure in her life. And ladies, let me just challenge you with this.

You know, for some ladies, practically speaking, being submissive simply means that if push comes to shove and my husband tells me to do something, I'll go ahead and do it. And submission is something that they will do in certain moments. What you need to realize is that submission is to be a way of life.

It is to be a lifestyle every day that is reflected in your attitudes towards your husband, about your husband. A woman who is submissive is a woman who takes seriously her calling to be a helper to her husband. She is someone who cultivates contentment in the life that her husband has provided for her.

She is not a woman who complains and whines about her life with her husband and is always complaining bitterly. That's not a submissive woman. A submissive woman is also not a woman who is seeking to manipulate and to control her husband.

A submissive woman, a woman who recognizes her husband as her head, is also a woman who speaks to her husband as she would to an authority figure. She speaks to him respectfully. She speaks about him to other people in a respectful way.

It's a lifestyle. It's not just something that kicks in if you happen to disagree on something. And I say that to some of you ladies, because some of you may be thinking, you know, oh, no, is this for today or not? Do I need to wear a head covering or not? And I got to wrestle through this.

What some of you probably need to be spending your time doing is asking yourself, am I really submissive? Because if you're not, don't waste your time asking whether this is for today or not, whether you need to wear a head covering. If you're not submitting to your husband as a lifestyle and your attitude, your thinking and your actions and your words, then don't, I'm begging you, don't wear a head covering. Because it would be a lie.

So that's where our focus needs to be, at least for this morning. And so this is the structure of relationships in God's economy. Therefore, verse four, in light of this structure, Paul says every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

Now, he's disgracing his head if he does this. What is his head? What is he just said in verse three is the head of the man. Jesus Christ.

So what he's saying is the man would be disgracing Jesus Christ if he were to have something on his head while praying or prophesying. Some commentators say, no, it's not about disgracing Jesus Christ. He's talking about disgracing his own head.

Certainly both ideas would be true to Paul. But I think the focus here is on the fact that that man would be dishonoring Jesus Christ if he prays to God with some kind of covering on his head. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

Now, notice the prophesying that Paul makes reference to here. Obviously, we're talking about an audible, verbal ministry, not just something that a man does. You don't prophesy in your heart.

And also, where did prophecy most often occur? According to First Corinthians 14, verse four, the one who prophesies edifies what? The church. OK, that's taught in First Corinthians 14, four. And so the idea is we're talking about a verbal ministry where there is an audience of other believers.

And the net result of that prophecy that has been uttered is that the church has been edified. So at least we're talking at the very least, we're talking about what happens within the gathering, the worshiping assembly of believers. But it probably also may even go beyond that to include prophecy at any time, whether in or outside of an official church service.

All right. So if we're talking about a verbal ministry of prophecy with an audience there, then when we envision the man praying, Paul isn't so much talking about a man praying privately in his prayer closet and praying silently in his heart. Paul is talking about verbal praying where there is an audience of people gathered around who are following along in that prayer.

So the man is exercising some leadership here. He is ministering publicly through prayer and through prophecy. And Paul says every man who has something on his head while doing this is dishonoring his head, Jesus Christ, and also no doubt dishonoring himself.

Now, folks, let me say something about the expression in verse four where that is translated something on his head. You might want to underline that something on his head. The Greek expression that is underneath these words is the Greek expression kata, which is a preposition kephales, which is the word for head.

And literally it means down head. So the idea is something down on his head. It can speak of something hanging down from his head or something that is down upon his head.

Now, I don't normally go throwing Greek expressions at you like that, but I do that with this because there are some out of sixty one commentators. There were three. There were three who took this as a reference to hair that Paul is really talking about long hair on a man.

And he's got long hair hanging down from his head as he's praying or prophesying. And of course, those who would understand it this way take the view that the head covering that Paul is advocating here is not an external head covering that you put on your head, but he's merely talking about long hair for women and short hair for men. And so they say kata kephales is a reference here to long hair.

However, there really is no argument for that view from the way that this word is used, both in and secular Greek literature and also in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. One Greek writer that I was reading from this month who actually was born in eighty four five. So he was living in the area of Greece during Paul's day.

He was writing and he was describing a man and he says this man was walking with his toga kata kephales. So he's not talking about hair. He's talking about the man having a toga that was down on his head.

Let me also very quickly have you go to Esther, chapter six, or if you don't want to turn there, at least just listen. Esther, chapter six. You guys know the story about Haman and Mordecai.

Haman hated Mordecai and had a lot of malice in his heart against him. But the king was reviewing records and he saw that Mordecai had actually done a great service to him and to the kingdom. And so he calls Haman in and says, Hey, man, how should I honor someone who's done something so great for me? And Haman's thinking, oh, he's talking about me.

So Haman starts listing off all these things that the king ought to do. And then the king says, well, so be it done to Mordecai and Haman. I want you to go do that.

Well, Haman goes and does what the king commanded. And then after that, and, you know, he's hating it every step of the way. But then in verse 12 of Esther, chapter six, it says, Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate.

But Haman hurried home morning with Kata Kefalis. And the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it says Kata Kefalis. So Haman went home morning.

He was hastening to his home and he was Kata Kefalis. Now, what does that mean? Does that mean he grew long hair real quick as he was running home? No, obviously he's throwing something on his head. And so in this one occasion where this expression is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and also from secular Greek literature, it's very evident that Paul is talking about some external thing on top of the man's head that may be hanging down from his head, but it is nonetheless on his head.

The evidence is very clear, and that's why the majority of commentators overwhelmingly just understand it in this way. So he says every man who has some external covering on top of his head while praying or prophesying is disgracing his head. Now look at verse five, but it's different for women.

But every woman who has her head uncovered. Now, the word uncovered is a different word than what Paul uses in verse four. But what's the contrast? If in verse four, it's very evident he's talking about an external head covering on a man's head.

What is the opposite of that? It's a woman who does not have an external covering that is on top of her head. And Paul says every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying again, she's ministering publicly through prayer and prophecy. Paul says if she doesn't have an external covering on her head, she is disgracing her head.

Now, who is her head? According to verse three, who's her head? Her husband. All right. But again, it's ambiguous.

Is Paul saying she's disgracing herself and her own head or is she disgracing her husband? Certainly, Paul would say both ideas are true. But I think the emphasis is on the fact that she is disgracing her husband and dishonoring him in doing this. And Paul says, in fact, look what he says at the end of verse five.

She is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved, in other words, completely balded. All right. Paul is saying to my way of thinking as an inspired apostle, a woman who ministers publicly in a church gathering or anywhere else and she is not having a her head covered.

That woman is in the same category of a woman whose head is completely balded. Paul is saying now what he's referring to in making reference to a woman whose head is shaved is at the very least something that was humiliating for a woman. The Jews and the Talmud considered a woman who deliberately shaved her head as a woman that was extremely ugly.

And also it was viewed as a sign of humiliation. If a wife was caught in adultery, one of the things the husband would do sometimes is shave her head to humiliate her and to show the seriousness of her sin. One ancient Greek writer says that if a woman has unworthy children, then let her shave her own head.

It was a sign of embarrassment and also of humiliation. It was not a good thing. There's also some indication that female slaves sometimes they would shave the heads of female slaves to denote ownership.

It was a very low thing. It was not a good thing. And Paul is saying any woman that comes to church and she ministers without an external head covering on her head, she is in the same category of a woman whose head has been completely balded.

Now, let him explain himself in verse six. He says, for if a woman does not cover her head, then my advice is let her also have her hair cut off, literally let her have her hair cropped close. All right.

This is a different word than the word for shave. So he's saying if she's not going to wear an external head covering, then you know what? If she's going to throw off that symbol of her femininity, then my recommendation is why don't you be consistent and go all the way and get yourself a butch haircut? That's what he's saying here quite literally. But he says, I know you all agree that that's a shameful thing.

So he says, if or since it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut close or cropped close to her head or to have her head shaved, and now he's using that same word that he used in verse five to be completely balded, then let her cover her head. He's saying to ladies, he's saying, if you know and I know that you know this, if it is a shameful thing to get a butch haircut or to shave your head deliberately and to be completely balded, if you agree with me on that, then please understand that you should also agree with me and the need to wear a head covering. So that's his argument.

He's saying because of the structure of relationships in God's economy, the man Christ is ahead of every man. The man is the head of the woman in the home. We need to reflect that.

We need to respect that structure of relationships in God's economy when we gather for worship and we show that we demonstrate that by the man not having a head covering when he ministers publicly and by the woman wearing a head covering when she ministers publicly, Paul says, through prayer or through prophecy. Now, you may look at Paul's argument and go, all right, I know he sees a connection, but I don't see the connection logically. But you know what? You at least need to acknowledge this is a connection that an inspired writer of scripture is making.

Christ is ahead of every man. The man in the home is the head of the wife. And therefore, this needs to be symbolized by the man not having a physical, visible, external covering over his head when he ministers publicly.

But the woman should. Some commentators have tried to make a connection. And this kind of works for me that, see, as a man in the home, your head is Christ, who is not visible.

He is not immediately visible, whereas the wife has an earthly, visible head. And so the wife symbolizes that with a visible, tangible symbol, whereas the man should not do that because his head is Christ, who is not visible to us here on earth and so forth. And I think that that may be a decent explanation.

But nonetheless, this is the connection that Paul is making here. Now, let's go to verse seven, where in verses seven through 10, Paul gives a second argument for why women ought to wear head coverings in worship and why men should not. And fill in the blank here, argument number two on your handout is because of the order, manner and purpose of God's creation of man and woman, because of the order, the manner and the purpose of God's creation of men and women.

Look at what he says in verse seven. He says, for a man ought not. In other words, this is morally necessary.

The man should not have his head covered. Why? Since he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of man.

And what Paul is saying at the beginning there is that man was created by God directly from the dust of the ground. And man was created in the image of God and for the purpose of glorifying God directly without any intervening intermediary or any intervening head that man is answerable to. OK, and so man is in the image and glory of God.

And saying that Paul is not saying that women are not in the image and glory of God. He's not saying that you don't see him deny that in this passage. But there is a unique way in which men display the image and the glory of God directly because there is no intervening head that they are answerable to.

But he says, but the woman is the glory of man. That doesn't mean that she does not glorify God. But there is a sense in which she is the glory of man.

And if you're wondering what Paul means by what he says, let him explain his meaning beginning in verse eight. He says, what I mean by this is this. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man.

For indeed, man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. He's saying what I mean by saying that the woman is the glory of man is, first of all, that the woman originated from the man. The man did not originate from the woman.

God did not create Eve and then say, you know what? I'm going to create a man. I'm going to cause Eve to fall into a deep sleep and I'll take a rib from her side and I will fashion a man for her. That's not what happened.

God also did not do what he certainly did with the animal kingdom. God created both male and female directly at the same time. He didn't create a male bear and then put that bear to sleep and then create a female bear from the rib of that bear that he created.

He created all of them at the same time, male and female. But with human beings, it was very different. God created Adam first.

Right. And then God said, it's not good for man to be alone. So I'm going to make a helper that corresponds to him, that is suitable to him and his needs as a man.

And so God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He opened his side, he extracted a rib and then he took that rib and did an amazing thing with it. He fashioned a beautiful woman.

And Paul's point in verse eight is that in that sense, Eve originated from the man. So Eve was created second. Also, she derived her existence from the man.

She originated from the man. Paul says in verse eight, man did not originate out of the woman, but woman out of the man. And not only did she come from the man, but look at verse nine.

He says, indeed, man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Not only was she created out of the man, but she was created for the man. God created her for the man's sake to be a

helper corresponding to him.

And so God created man and man is directly answerable to God. There is no other intervening head that man is answerable to, especially like in the home and in his marriage relationship. However, when God created the woman, he created her for the man's sake.

And the man in the home is her head. And she has been created by God to be his helper. She lives, as it were, for that man's glory and to honor him.

You understand what Paul is saying there? And so Paul would say, that's what I mean when I say that the woman is the glory of man. Paul would say, I'm not saying that she doesn't glorify God. In fact, Paul would say the woman best glorifies God when she seeks to honor her man and to serve him and to fulfill her God ordained role for being on this earth.

And so Paul is saying, when you look at creation, the structure of creation, the order of creation, the manner in which God went about creating men and women, and also the purpose of God's creation, you understand here that there is a need to symbolize that. Look at what he says in verse 10. Therefore, because of these creation realities, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.

She was created from the man and she was created for the man. The man is her head. And therefore, there is a need for the woman to have a physical, tangible symbol of that authority of her husband that is over her.

Now, again, folks, I'm not the one really saying this. Paul is saying this, and I'm trying to explain to you what the word of God is teaching here. And you may not like this.

You may hate this, but this is what God's word says. Now, you know, it could be that, you know, a woman could take a symbol of her husband and put it on the sole of her shoe. OK, but that wouldn't have much meaning because she's trampling on that.

All right. And she could have had a symbol of authority that she's to put on her shoulder or something. But that wouldn't symbolize the reality of the relationship and the purpose of creation.

She therefore, because she was created from the man and for the man and the man is her head in the home, that symbol of her husband's authority needs to be on top of her, needs to be on her head. And so in going back to creation, folks, Paul is making the case to the women of Corinth of the need for them to have a physical, tangible symbol of their husband's authority upon their head. Well, that's the second argument.

Paul then moves to a third argument. And this is the monster. The third argument is, ladies, you need to do it because of the angels.

He says at the end of verse 10, or let's read the whole verse, therefore, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels. Well, all of us would go, Paul, say more. I mean, if you were here today, Paul, say a little more than that.

What do you mean by that? But there's no explanation. It's evident that Paul said all he needed to say for the Corinthians to understand that they would have gone. They would have said, oh, OK, that's a good argument.

There would have been some kind of understanding between them and the apostle Paul to where this was all he needed to say. Today, we are not privy to that understanding that was between them. And I actually came across eight different views of what Paul meant by what he said.

And not a one of them really hit me like, oh, that's got to be the right one. And most of the commentators who would give their view would say, I don't even know if this is right. But some say that, ladies, you need to have a head covering so that the evil angels won't lust after you.

You may cause them to lust after you as what happened in Genesis six, according to the thinking of some. One commentator suggested that you need to wear a head covering so that the good angels aren't tempted to become evil by lusting after you. Some say that the reference to the angels is the fact the angels cover their faces and cover themselves in God's presence.

As we see in Isaiah, chapter six, verse two, and therefore following the example of the angels, you need to cover up as well. Others suggest, and this is probably the most compelling explanation to me, that there is a sense in which we do live in the presence of angels. Angels are sent by God to be ministering spirits to those who are God's children.

In first Peter, chapter one, Peter says, angels stoop low to look into the things of salvation that all of us are experiencing. In first Corinthians, chapter four, verse nine, Paul speaks of himself and his colleagues as being spectacles to angels. And we also see in Ephesians 3:10 that that through our lives, God is wanting to make a statement to the principalities and powers about the greatness of his wisdom.

And that perhaps Paul is wanting them to be mindful of the fact that there is an angelic audience that is there when we gather together for worship and in other settings. And being aware of that, it's worth considering that you would want to make the right statement to them about your position before God underneath the headship of your husband. Others suggest that you need to wear a head covering in order to be protected from the angels.

And obviously that would be a reference to evil angels. Others suggest that it's not talking about angels at all. The word should be translated messengers, and it's merely a reference to pastors and bishops and overseers.

And they do some real funny things with that. Others say the word is to a reference to messengers from other churches who come to visit the church of Corinth. And Paul is saying, you know, they may be coming from the church of Philippi and their custom is for the women to wear head coverings.

And they're going to come and you guys aren't heeding this custom. You know, there's so many different varieties of what Paul could be talking about. And honestly, I just I don't know dogmatically.

All I know is Paul is saying, women, you need to wear a head covering because of the angels. In fact, I've already half decided that from now on, whenever my kids, whenever I tell them to do something and they go, but why, dad? I'm just going to say because of the angels. See, we're learning parenting tips here as well.

There's but I don't know if you want to study this further. There's actually one article that I have, a scholarly journal article just on this expression and what it can mean. But after reading through that, the writer of that article was just as lost as I am.

So anyway, but this is one of his reasons. Ladies, you need to wear head coverings because of the angels. Now, having said what he said in verse 10, Paul realizes, you know what? If you know, I agree with everything I've just said and I don't take anything back.

But what I have said so far in the last few verses is not the whole truth. And I need to balance it out with some complementary truths. All right.

Paul has said the woman has originated from the man. And that's true. But that's not the complete truth.

He also says the woman was created for the man's sake and the man wasn't created for the woman's sake. And that's true, but that's not the whole truth. And so Paul wants to give some balancing truths before he moves on in his argument.

So he says in verse 10, however, in the Lord, neither is the woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. Paul is saying in the Lord, especially in Christ or because of the Lord and the way that he has ordained things. The truth is the man is nothing apart from the woman and the woman is nothing apart from the man.

That could be denoting mutual dependence once man and woman are alive. But it also could be understood as man does not exist without the woman and the woman does not exist without the man. And that both ideas are probably involved.

God has so ordained the human race to where there is a mutual interdependence upon one another. He says in verse 12, for as the woman originates out of the man, so also the man now has his birth through the woman. And the truth is all things originate from God.

You see what he's doing there? He's saying, you know what? The truth is Eve did come from Adam and in a way that is symbolic of the woman's position in her husband's life. But the fact is that man is not independent of the woman. There is no man in this room who would be in existence today if it were not for a woman who gave birth to you.

Amen. And God is so designed things to where men and women need each other. That is by divine design.

And if you're a husband, you need to realize you're nothing apart from your wife. And if you're a wife, you need to realize you're nothing apart from your husband. You need each other.

There should be a relationship of interdependence and support with one another. And the truth is, you know, man, you can't go saying to your wife, well, Eve came from Adam. And so, you know, that's why I'm the head and I'm just going to rule you and lord it over you.

And you're just going to have to deal with that. No, realize that ultimately everything comes from God. Adam came directly from God.

And the truth is, ultimately Eve did too, did she not? God's the one who took the rib from Adam and God's the one who fashioned her directly. So ultimately everything is from God. What Paul is trying to do here is he's trying to make the point, you know what, though I'm talking about a difference in hierarchy and in function and in authority, I'm not thereby talking about inequality in essence.

I am not saying by that that men are superior to women or that women are inferior to men. There is equality before God. Both of them have received their life from God.

Both of them are mutually dependent upon one another and should live in a way that reflects that appreciation for the opposite sex and their dependence upon one another. So he gives those qualifying truths. But then beginning in verse 13, he continues in his argument, and that is this argument.

Number four is because nature also teaches this. He's saying, I want to come back to my point regarding my teaching about head coverings. Men should not wear head coverings when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

Women should wear head coverings when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. And I've already given you three arguments. Number one, because the structure of relationships in God's economy.

Number two, because of the order, manner and purpose of God's creation of man and woman. And number three, because of the angels. But now, number four, I want to give you is because nature also teaches this.

Nature gives you a hint with regard to this very point. So look at what he says, beginning in verse 13. He says, judge for yourselves.

Guys, in light of everything that I've said, you know, I don't want to just come right out and go telling you what to do. Judge for yourselves. And you'll see that what I'm saying is true, even with regard to nature.

He says, is it proper for woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Is it proper? Is it fitting? Verse 14, does not even nature itself teach you this? Now, when Paul says, doesn't even nature teach you this by saying even nature? What he's saying is I am teaching you this. An apostle is teaching you this. God's word is teaching you this.

But does not nature also join with this apostle in saying the same thing to you? So when Paul points to nature, he's not saying nature is the only authority in this matter. What he's saying is this is what I'm teaching you. But doesn't nature agree with what I'm saying in giving you a hint in this direction? He says, for example, does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it's a dishonor to him? If a man has long hair, but verse 15, if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her.

Guys, this is Paul is saying, doesn't nature teach you this? And when he makes reference to nature, he's talking about just the way that God has constituted men and women as it is reflected in cultures and in society. And universally from age to age, culture to culture, overwhelmingly universally, the custom is that men have shorter hair than women. Now, one possible exception is the the citizens of Sparta in ancient Greece.

The men had shoulder length hair, so their hair was longer, but women had even longer hair than that in Sparta. So even in that society, though, the custom was for men to have a little bit longer hair than in other societies. The truth is, women still have longer hair than men.

And so really the evidence is from nature, the way that God has constituted men, men and women, is this, that it's a shame for a man to have long hair. That's considered unusual and shameful. But if a woman has long hair, that's thought to be a great thing.

If even in our society today, you see a man walking down the street and he has hair down to halfway down his back, you kind of do a double take and you notice that. And and you may have questions regarding that person. Paul is saying it's a shameful thing.

And you may wonder what is the orientation of that that individual? It stands out. It's unusual. But if a woman walks down that street and her hair is the same length, you may observe that.

But you don't think anything unusual about that. You think, wow, that's that's nice hair. Nothing is unusual about that at all.

And so the teaching here is this. The way Paul words this, Paul is saying, I am teaching you and nature joins me in teaching you something. And that is for a man to have long hair is a disgrace.

It is a shameful thing. But for a woman to have long hair, I am teaching you and nature teaches you that it's a glory unto her. Now, guys, in light of and I'm talking to the men here, in light of what Paul says in verse 14, I could not have long hair.

I just couldn't do it because that would be a violation of scripture. And I'm amazed sometimes that at Christians who disregard this. I just yesterday was flipping through a Christian magazine and came upon a picture of a member of a band, a Christian band.

And the guy, it was evident he had hair about halfway down his back. And it was actually kind of a feminine looking hairstyle even. And I looked at that and the thought always goes through my mind.

What does he do with this? I mean, does he look at verse 14 and say, well, I just I just don't want to do that. I mean, what do you do with this? I don't understand how a man could look at what the scripture teaches and saying that Paul is saying I am teaching. And even nature teaches you that it's a disgrace for a man to have long hair.

How can someone read that and then say, but I'm going to have long hair? That's wrong thinking. That is not biblical thinking. And as I looked at that man doing that, I don't want to be in the business of judging his heart.

But you know what? I need to be in the business of judging obedience to scripture. And this guy may have other great qualities. But in that particular area, I would consider him as not living in harmony with verse 14.

OK, and also keep in mind, ladies, Paul is already taught in verse six that it's also a shame for a woman to have a butch haircut or to deliberately shave her head. If I were a woman and I am not, I could not have hair that is cropped close to my head and have a very short haircut. I could not have a hairstyle that was more like that of a man's than a woman's.

Paul is saying it is a shame. It's disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cropped close or to deliberately shave her head. Paul also says it is a dishonor and a disgrace for a man to have long hair.

Now, what what this tells us, guys, is that God cares about these kinds of things. OK, he cares about even the way we wear our hair. And the spirit of what Paul is talking about is if you're a man, be masculine and wear your hair like a man and have shorter hair.

If you are a woman, be feminine and wear your hair like that of a woman. That's the spirit of what he's talking about. But I would also urge all of you to give consideration to the fact that he's not simply talking about style, but he's also talking about length.

I'm not talking about that. Paul brings that up as something that is important to consider. But the spirit of what he's speaking about is men should have masculine hairstyles and women should have feminine hairstyles.

And if you cross over and you violate that, Paul is saying that's a disgrace. But anyway, Paul is continuing. He's got a point to make.

All right. And his point isn't so much the hair, although that is certainly involved here. He says nature teaches you that if a man has long hair, it's a dishonor to him.

But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. Why? Because her hair is given to her for a covering. Now, you may look at that last statement and go, oh, man, what a curveball.

He's been telling women they need to wear have coverings over their heads. And now he's saying I've been he's been talking about external head coverings all along. But now he's saying her hair is given to her for a covering.

So that must be what the covering is. And that's why three out of 61 commentators that I've studied take this whole passage to be referring to here as being the covering that women should have. But there's a couple of problems with that.

Number one, the word that is translated covering in verse 15 is a totally different word than the word for covered and uncovered that Paul has been using thus far in this passage. And also understand that if you take this then to mean that all Paul is advocating is long hair on women, that women should not have short hair, but they should instead have long hair. If you take it to mean that, what do you do with verse six? And by the way, the three commentators that took the view that Paul is talking about long hair on women and that's the covering, not one of them tried to explain verse six.

They stayed as far away from this verse as they could. Look what Paul would be saying in verse six. He says, if a woman doesn't cover her head.

Now, let's say he's talking about long hair. All right. Paul would then be saying, if a woman doesn't have long hair and instead has short hair, then let her also have her hair cut short.

That would be what he's saying, if all along the only thing in his thinking is that women should have long hair, that that's a nonsensical point that Paul would be making there if all along that has been all that he is speaking about. And that is why this is, you know, some people on the surface level, they latch onto this view because it's an easier view. But serious scholars who earnestly grapple with everything that is said in this passage overwhelmingly just say this cannot be talking about here.

Paul is clearly talking about an external head covering. So that leaves us still with the question, what is Paul's point then? Well, his point is this. He's saying nature itself teaches you men to have shorter hair, to have your heads more uncovered than women.

Nature teaches women to have longer hair that serves in a sense as a natural covering. And his point is, therefore, ladies, you need to take your cues from nature. Nature is sending you a message, and that is cover up, cover up.

Nature is giving you a hint by giving you longer hair, constituting you in that way. It's giving you a hint that you therefore need to wear a head covering. Now, you may look at his argumentation and say, well, that's just not real compelling to me, but it's a biblical argument and it's one that we're going to have to wrestle with and accept as true.

And so Paul says you need to heed my teaching, my tradition on head coverings. Men should not wear them. Women should when ministering publicly through prayer, prophecy.

And the fourth reason you ought to do that is because nature teaches this. There's a fifth and final reason that he gives, and that is in verse 16. And that is because this is the custom in all the churches.

This is the custom in all the churches. Now, he's not talking about the custom of pagan society. He's shown no regard to that throughout this passage.

But he's talking about this is what all the churches do, he says in verse 16. But if one is inclined to be contentious, you know what that indicates? That tells us that people were fighting about this back in Paul's day. There were people arguing with him, even in his day, saying, I don't like this.

I disagree with this. This doesn't feel right. And here's my arguments for why I think I ought to have an uncovered head.

And they want to argue about it. And Paul had to deal with people like this, even in his day, even in his day, when Paul gave this teaching, Christians, some of them would go, man, I got a problem with this. I don't want to do this.

People didn't just say all of them, oh, yeah, this is totally great. Yeah, we accept this because this is what everyone does anyway. No, there were people fighting about this.

Then the word translated contentious. I love this word. It's a compound word.

It's the word love and the word victory. It speaks of someone who's a lover of victory. They love to win.

They love to argue and to win arguments. We all know people like that. But he says, if one is inclined to be contentious, you know what? I've done my best.

I've walked you through the reasons. And if you're still saying, but Paul, what about this? What about this? And what about this argument I have that would oppose what you're saying? Paul says, listen, if you want to fight about it, I'm not going to say any more about this. He says, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

This is what all of the churches do in the city of Corinth and Philippi. Thessalonica throughout Macedonia, Galatia, Asia Minor, in Antioch, in Jerusalem, all the churches do this. This is the universal custom and all of the churches, men in worship services do not cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

Women in all of the churches do cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or through prophecy. And so, folks, regardless of what you may think about this passage and whether you think the specifics of Paul's instructions are for today or not, I think we all have to gather around the text and agree that just from the evidence that's here, that Paul is advocating an external head covering. And at the very least, he's telling women and men in first century Corinth what they need to do.

And he's telling them, men, you should not wear a head covering and women, you should wear a head covering when you minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Well, folks, I want to encourage you to come back tonight. What we're going to do tonight is based on the exegesis that we have done, we're going to take some time tonight to just deal with the applicational dimensions of this and try to answer the question of our head coverings for today.

And I'll do my best to explain to you what all the issues are and let you know where I've at this present moment have landed, although I'm still in process on this in a number of ways. And with that and giving that to you, not only this morning, but also tonight, I hope it will begin a loving, earnest conversation amongst us as elders and as a congregation on this issue. But let me have you bow your heads this morning.

Let's just pray and ask God to give us open hearts to receive whatever he has to say to us from his word, and we won't have a closing song just for the sake of time this morning. But let's pray together, dear God, make us a holy people. Both in our hearts and our attitudes, but also, Lord, and the externals of our religion.

And when I say externals, I mean the externals that you explicitly teach. May we give heed to your words. And consider them and bring our lives into conformity with.

With your word as fully as we possibly can, Lord, as we approach this issue further tonight, I just pray that you would give us all open hearts, just ready to receive whatever you have and ready to do the work. Every one of us in this room, we have a lot of work to do with this passage. And I pray, Lord, that we would not be lazy and slothful and rely upon the opinions of others, but that we would search the scriptures ourselves to see if things are really so.

So help us to be earnest in our pursuit of the truth and to be loving, humble and gracious with one another as we pursue truth together. We just give ourselves to you in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen.

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