

# Head-Coverings in Worship Part 2

by Milton Vincent

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*Paul's teaching on head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11 emphasizes the importance of following God's design for men and women in their relationships and in their worship.*

**Duration:** 1:43:20

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:2

**Topics:** "Head Coverings"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the topic of head coverings for women in the church based on 1 Corinthians 11. He begins by acknowledging that there are differing views on whether this instruction is still applicable today. The speaker presents arguments from the text and various commentators who believe that head coverings are still relevant. He also acknowledges that there are respected scholars who hold the opposing view. The sermon concludes with the speaker stating his current position, which is open to further study and discussion.

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## Transcript

Well, good evening. Well, let me invite you to turn back in your Bibles tonight to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

And if you want to give a title to what we'll be doing tonight, the title of the message will be our head coverings for today. Our head coverings for today. And I guess, you know, we've had a lot of fun with this.

Someone brought me a few weeks ago a Coleman head covering. I guess it's kind of like a mosquito net, but it's a camouflage. It's like something you might wear when you're camping.

Scott, you want to model this for me? There you go. And you can get these at any sporting goods store. And also, someone brought me tonight a box of coffee filters, which is we were actually talking this morning that we could have ushers pass these out.

Like when you come into our service. So disposable head. Scott, could you model this? There you go.

But anyway, you know what? I've really appreciated from from everybody. I mean, there's not a single person that's an exception to this. But everyone, especially the ladies, have had a heart that, you know, whatever God says, that's what we want to do.

And in a way, that's actually made me even more sober and more careful than I would have otherwise been, because there's such a readiness to just do whatever it is that God's word says, that it makes me think long and hard about what I'm going to say. One lady told my wife this morning that, you know, I'm willing to wear tennis shoes slung over my shoulders. If that's what God wanted and told us to do in his word, just whatever God's word says, that's what I want to do.

And that's the attitude that we should always have with Scripture. A lot of times Christians have the attitude, God, reveal your will to me so that I can then decide whether or not I want to do it. Teach me from your word so that I can then decide if I'm going to obey it or not.

But to have an attitude that says, speak to me, Lord, because I am your bond slave and I will hear and obey whatever you say. I don't even know what you're going to say yet, Lord, but whatever it is, I'll do it. That's the kind of attitude that God desires from us.

And people who have that kind of attitude never lack for truth from the Lord. He dumps his truth and his grace upon such individuals. And that's been a great blessing to me over the months leading up to this.

Just hearing those kinds of words of encouragement from a number of ladies in the church is manifesting that kind of open heart. That's willing to do whatever God's word says, even if no one else is doing it. No other churches may be doing it nearby or or no one else in the culture may be doing it.

But anyway, what I want to do tonight is kind of do a little bit of review of what we covered this morning. And there's a couple loose ends that are very important for me to tie up from an exegetical point of view tonight as we look at the passage. And then what I would like to do after that is to deal with the application of question of our head coverings as Paul's teaching about head coverings applicable to us today.

And I'll try to answer that. And then when we're done with that, if I don't end up going way too long, we'll open up the floor for one or two questions. But anyway, First Corinthians chapter 11, just by way of review, Paul's primary point in this passage in verses two through 16 is that men should not cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

Women, however, should cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Whether we're going to end up disagreeing over the question of is this for today or not, it is pretty clear from the passage. And I think all of us would agree on this, that Paul is teaching that men should not cover their heads, whereas women should cover their heads when ministering publicly through prayer or prophecy.

Paul does not just teach this, but he ends up giving what amounts to five arguments that we saw this morning to explain why it is important for men and women to attire themselves in this way. And I'll be honest with you guys, it would have been nice if Paul would have just said, men, don't wear head covering. Women do it because you know what? I'm an apostle.

Jesus revealed this to me and all the other apostles. So this is just what you got to do. It would have been nice if he would have said that.

But one of the things you'll notice about 1 Corinthians is Paul doesn't do that a lot. He'll tell the Corinthians flee immorality, but then he gives them theological truths and he reasons from those theological truths to teach them how to take theology and to reason their way towards ethical behavior. With regards to eating foods that have been offered to idols, Paul could have just said, hey, don't ever go to the temple again.

And that issue is settled. But he doesn't do that. He takes three chapters to deal with that issue.

And a lot of what he's doing is giving them gospel truths, theological truths, and he reasons with them. He's teaching the Corinthians how to think. Well, Paul in this passage does tell us he makes it clear a man should not have a head covering on his head when ministering publicly and a woman should.

He does teach us that, but he doesn't just say that and move on. He ends up going into the matter and giving us explanations, teaching us how to think, even to reason our way to this point of view by going back to creation, the structure of relationships in God's economy, the glory of God, angelic beings and nature. He's teaching us how to think with regard to this area.

And so that's what he does in this passage. And as I said this morning, some of these arguments may not seem overly compelling to you, but whether they seem that way or not, they are biblical arguments. And so they are very compelling for that reason alone.

But the first reason that Paul gives as to why it is true that we need to heed his teaching or why it is true that the Corinthians needed to heed his teaching on the issue of head coverings is, he says, because of the structure of relationships in God's economy. He says in verse 3, 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. That's the way it is, Paul says.

And therefore, verse 4, every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. And verse 5, every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces or dishonors her head, which is her husband. If the man has a head covering, he's disgracing Jesus Christ, Paul says.

If a woman does not have a head covering, she is disgracing not only herself but also her husband. Now, folks, one of the things I wanted to comment about is in verse 4. There are many commentators that make a mistake with verse 4. And that mistake is they say, well, there really wasn't a problem in Corinth or in the church of men covering their heads or veiling themselves. Paul merely states verse 4 as a hypothetical, as a lead in to what he wants to say to women.

However, folks, the cultural and the historical evidence indicates that Paul has very good reason for saying what he says to men in verse 4 and telling them not to cover their heads. Folks, the overwhelming evidence from the culture of Paul's day, the archaeological, the literary evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the custom in the Roman Empire was for both women and men to cover their heads when involved in a religious exercise, especially in some kind of a leadership capacity. This was a custom in Paul's day.

And keep in mind that the city of Corinth, although it was in Greece, was a Roman colony at this particular time. Rome had rebuilt that city. And so the city of Corinth would have been fully acquainted with Roman customs.

In fact, when Rome would establish a colony, they would view that colony as an extension of Rome and they would make sure that legal institutions and Roman ways of religion and so forth were fully implemented in a city such as Corinth, which was a colony. And in Roman society, just the evidence from archaeological finds, from literary, from images on coins and so forth indicate that it was a practice for men as well as for women to cover their heads when they were involved in a religious exercise in any kind of a leadership capacity. Listen to what one author says.

In fact, let me give you the name of this article. It's called The Use, Misuse, and Neglect of Archaeological Evidence in Some Modern Works on 1 Corinthians. And what he does is he'll take statements that commentators have made, historical statements, and he'll show how the evidence really does not back up some of those statements.

And one of the things he says in this article is this. The practice of men covering their heads in the context of prayer and prophecy was a common pattern of Roman piety and widespread during the late Republic and early Empire. Since Corinth was a Roman colony, there should be little doubt that this aspect of Roman religious practice deserves greater attention by commentators than it has received.

In fact, another author speaks about the fact that with some of the archaeological finds, they have found over 20 statues of the Emperor Augustus. One of those statues they found in the city of Corinth dating back to this time period. And in that statue, the Emperor Augustus is holding a bowl in his hand that he's going to use to pour out as a libation.

He is involved in a religious exercise there. And you know what? The Emperor Augustus has his head covered. That was the custom.

And I could take time tonight, but I don't want to because we've got a lot of ground to cover this evening. But from a variety of standpoints, there is abundant evidence that it was not unusual at all. In fact, it was customary for men and for women to cover their heads when involved in a religious exercise.

They have actually found depictions of a group of people who were involved in a religious exercise. And there may be a number of men there or women there. And many of them don't have their heads covered.

But the ones that are actually involved in offering the sacrifice, they have their heads covered, whether they're a man or a woman. The evidence clearly indicates this. And you know what that means then? In verse four, if the custom was for both women and men to cover their heads when involved in worship, at least in a leadership capacity, if at least many of the Roman men did it, if not all of the Romans did it, what is clear is that what Paul is saying in verse four is actually the precise opposite of what the cultural practice was in his day throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire.

And so I want you to keep that in mind because I think that's going to be significant in the latter part of the message tonight as we try to ask the question, is this practice for today or is it not? But nonetheless, the first argument that he gives is you need to heed my traditional teaching with regard to head coverings because of the structure of relationships in God's economy. The second reason is, and we find this in verses seven through ten, is because of the order, the manner and the purpose of God's creation of man and woman. Paul, to make his case for head coverings, goes back to creation to buttress his point.

He says in verse seven, for a man ought not to have his head covered. Why? Since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man. What do I mean by that, Paul says? What I mean, verse eight, is that man does not originate from or out of woman, but woman out of man.

For indeed, man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. So that's what I mean when I say the woman is the glory of man. She came out of the man.

And so in some senses, her beauty is a reflection of the glory of man. And also, she was created for the man. She was created by God to bring honor to her human head, which would be her husband.

And so Paul is arguing from creation. He comes to the conclusion of this argument in verse ten by saying, therefore, because of these creation realities, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head. He then gives a third argument at the end of verse ten, and that is because of the angels.

And that just means because of the angels. The fourth argument that he gives is found in verses 14, actually 13 through 15. And that is because nature also teaches this.

He says in verse 13, judge for yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even, in other words, I'm teaching this, but I'm not the only one teaching this. Listen to nature.

And when he refers to nature, he's speaking of the way that God has constituted man and woman. Operating, as it were, by just this code, this inward law, so to speak. Just being governed by just the way God created them to be.

And he says, does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor or a disgrace to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. Now, one comment I want to make about this before we move on. I made reference to this morning to the importance of considering the length of hair.

There are some commentators that say, well, don't worry about the length. The point is that you just need to have a masculine hairdo if you're a guy and a feminine do if you are a woman. And I agree with that.

But I want to be careful to not just minimize what Paul is saying. A lot of commentators do a lot of minimizing of a lot of things that are in this passage. And I would agree with that.

I think the real spirit of what Paul is talking about is that it's important that a man have a masculine hairdo and a woman have a feminine hairdo. But I think also thought needs to be given to length. But I wanted to say this as well, that, you know, if you're a guy here this morning and also tonight and you're saying, OK, it's a disgrace to have long hair.

Well, do I have hair that's too long or not? Or you may be a lady asking, is my hair too short or not? And so, Milton, tell me, you know, is my hair too long or is my hair too short? And I want you to know that I am passionately against someone standing in the pulpit and legislating something like this. I cannot stand up here and have someone come up here and model for you that here's how long your hair can be and it not be too long. Here's the measurement.

If it exceeds this limit by anything more than a millimeter, then you are in violation of Scripture. I can't do that. And I don't ever want to be in the business of doing that.

One of the churches I attended for a number of years, and I've shared this with you before, they had asked me, approached me and asked me to be a Sunday school teacher. And I was thrilled to say yes. And when I agreed to do that, I then went to a teacher's orientation meeting and we went over a number of things.

But one of the things they went over was they said, man, if you're going to be a teacher, you need to have short hair. And I was totally fine with that. But then they handed us a piece of paper that had a diagram, a profile of a man's head.

And it told us, you know, your hair cannot be on your ears. It cannot be on your collar. And it actually had lines demonstrating the angle of the cut, both from the back and the side, indicating it needs to be not only off the ears and off the collar, but it needs to be the tapered look.

I was uncomfortable with that. And I'll never be in the business of doing that from the pulpit. In addition to that, I remember hearing one Christian leader about 15 years ago saying in my presence and in the presence of many others who were listening to him, that a man can have hair on his ears and on his collar and be a Christian.

But he is obviously a babe in Christ. Well, see, I think those kinds of statements where someone is in the business of legislating precise lengths is very inappropriate biblically. Listen, I trust the spirit of God to show you if you're here tonight and you're wondering, man, is my hair too long? You know, it's down to my waist.

Is this is this too long or not? You know, if you're asking those kind of questions or is my hair too short? Listen, just pray about it. Go to the word of God. See what Paul says and consult your conscience in the matter and then do the right thing.

OK, and if even if there's any doubt in your mind, well, I don't think it is, but maybe it is. Well, let that be a factor in determining what you ought to do and letting your hair be longer if you're a woman or shorter if you are a man. And so I wanted to say that to say that I want to leave that with you.

And I don't want us as elders going around and doing hair checks and making sure the lady's hair is longer or men's hair is shorter. But anyway, this is Paul's argument. Nature itself teaches you this.

If a man has long hair, in other words, if his hair is overly covered by hair or his head is overly covered by hair, then it's a dishonor. If a woman has long hair, which is naturally covering her head, then it's a glory to her. And what he's saying is nature is giving a clue here.

Nature is agreeing with what I am saying and giving you the hint, ladies, that you need to cover up. And then he gives a fifth argument that is found in verse 16. And that is, he basically says, you need to heed my instructions regarding head coverings because this is just what we all do.

And in a sense, folks, verse 16 is not an argument. He's not saying do it because that's what everyone else does in the church. It's not an argument.

It's just his way of ending the matter. He's saying, if you want to argue, I'm not going to argue anymore. I've told you my points.

I've said my piece. If you want to keep arguing, I'm walking away from this argument. And I'm just saying, we don't have any other custom, nor do the churches of God.

Every church everywhere in the world today, Paul says, has this practice of women covering their heads and men not covering their heads. So, deal with that. If you're going to do something different, you're making yourself different than every other church that is in existence today.

Well, anyway, that's kind of a review of what we covered this morning. And even giving you that review and touching up on a couple loose ends, I by no means am under the illusion that every matter is settled. And maybe when we do our Q&A, you may have some questions about it.

I'll be happy to answer them. But anyway, coming to the issue now, which is the burning question of the hour. And that is, are head coverings for today? Is Paul's specific teaching regarding the wearing of head coverings applicable today? Now, all of us and every commentator agrees that the principles that Paul teaches and the truths that Paul teaches are certainly for today.

Even pastors and commentators that would say women don't need to wear head coverings today because that's not what the culture does. Every one of them would say, however, every truth Paul is teaching does apply today. So, there's no one that I read that says we can throw this whole passage away.

Please understand that. But we're dealing now with just the question of the head coverings and Paul's specific teaching with regard to head coverings. Should women wear head coverings today in the kinds of settings that Paul describes? Should men avoid wearing head coverings when in the situations that Paul describes here in 1 Corinthians chapter 11? Well, in answer to that question, are head coverings for today? Obviously, there are two points of view.

There are those who say yes, head coverings are for today. And then there are those who say no, head coverings are not for today. And those who say that Paul's explicit teaching with regard to head coverings is not applicable today.

Basically, what they say is this. All of Paul's principles and truths that he gives in this section apply today. However, because in our day it is not the culture for women to wear head coverings.

Therefore, if Paul were speaking today, he would speak differently to women than he does to women here in the first century in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And I'm going to basically tell you my view, but not just right off hand. But it'll become glaringly obvious within the next two or three minutes what my view is.

But I want to give you my view in a roundabout way by doing some thinking. And what I want us to do, first of all, is I want us to evaluate this first view. I want us to evaluate the view that says that Paul's teaching regarding head coverings are not for today.

Let's put that under the microscope and let's evaluate that more closely. First of all, in evaluating that, and by the way, let me say this. That is the view a huge part of me wants to hold.

Life would be a lot simpler if that were the right view. And every time I read a commentary early in my study that said articulated that view, I was like, OK, now what's he going to say to explain this? And I wanted him to do that because a part of me wants to hold that view because it actually is considerably simpler. But think about it.

If you're going to hold that view, you got two people here. One of them looks at an explicit passage in an epistle and says, wow, this is for today. And the other one looks at a passage in an epistle and says, this isn't for today.

Between those two individuals, who do you think would have the burden of proof? Who is the burden of proof on? Is it on the one that says, wow, this is what it says in Galatians and this applies to me today? Is the burden of proof on that person or is it on the person who looks at something clearly taught in epistle and says it's not for today? A or B? B. OK, we're all agreed on that. I mean, imagine later in chapter 11, we're dealing with the Lord's Supper and Paul talks about, you know, eating the bread and what that symbolizes and and drinking the cup and all that that symbolizes. Imagine somebody saying, well, you know, prove to me that this is for today.

I think this is not for today. And this was just for the first century because that's what people did. And but I don't think it's for today.

And I'm asking you to prove to me that this is for today. Well, the burden of proof is not on you to prove that the symbolism of the Lord's table is for today. The burden of proof would be on the individual who would say that it is not.

So understanding that the view that says false teaching on the head coverings is not applicable today with the burden of proof on them. We then try to examine what their proof and their thinking really is. And, folks, this honestly is where you end up being or where I personally was woefully disappointed in this point of view.

And that is this. You need to understand that those who hold this point of view, not a one of them will ever even try to give you one exegetical argument from the text of First Corinthians, chapter 11. Not a one of them will try this.

In fact, by their own admission, their viewpoint is not based on exegesis. You will never see someone saying, well, I don't believe it's for today. And let me prove it to you.

Well, you see what he says here in verses 8, 9 and 10 based on what he says here. That's why exegetically I have concluded this is not for today. No one even tries to do that from a textual or an exegetical basis.

In fact, Daniel Wallace, who was a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, he himself holds the view that this is not for today. Women don't have to wear head coverings today. But he himself says that the viewpoint that Paul's teaching on head coverings is applicable today.

He says that view is the easiest view to defend exegetically. He goes on to then say why he doesn't hold that view. And I'll deal with that in a moment.

But his reason for not holding that view has absolutely nothing, by his own admission, to do with exegesis of the passage of First Corinthians 11 or any other passage anywhere else in Scripture. And and folks, I'll be honest with you. I am you know, I want you know, I want to challenge you guys to be gracious, loving and humble as we talk over this matter.

And I want to be careful to do the same thing, even in the way that I speak about those who who hold to this particular position. And I don't want to demean them at all. But I'll be candid with you that I felt frequently frustrated because those who hold this point of view, they would articulate that in their commentaries.

But then they they really wouldn't do any kind of a job of really supporting their viewpoint. In fact, one commentator and I've really debated whether or not to give you his name and I've decided not to. But if I gave you his name, every one of us knows who this man is.

All of us in this room, including myself, have a tremendous amount of regard for this man for many, many good reasons. And I'm going to quote from him because this particular man, this particular commentator, whatever his viewpoint is, he typically represents the very best that could be said for that viewpoint. And it's very interesting in his commentary that and by the way, he holds the view that this is not for today.

In his preface to the section on 1 Corinthians 11, 2 through 16, he anticipates the fact that many people, especially feminists and egalitarians, are going to have a problem with a lot of what Paul says. He anticipates that and then says this, and I totally agree with this. He says, Amen to that.

Many people do that. The Bible condemns homosexuality. There are people who say, well, they didn't have an understanding back then of all the issues with regard to homosexuality.

The Bible clearly defines the roles of men and women and put some limitations on the roles of women in leadership in the church. And I've actually had Christian people say to me that that was the culture back then. And Paul didn't want to violate the culture.

It would have been a scandalous thing. And this author is right in calling that into question. However, this same author, a little bit later in the middle of his exegesis of this passage, out of nowhere, he explains what the passage says.

And then he says, it seems that Paul is not stating a divine universal requirement, but simply acknowledging a local custom. He goes on to say, it's the principle of women's subordination to men, not the particular symbol or mark of that symbol that Paul is teaching. In this passage.

Now, think about what he's just said. He has said that Paul is teaching a local custom. He's acknowledging a local custom.

Does it sound to you like Paul is merely acknowledging a local custom? When you go to creation to argue for people doing a certain thing, when you go to the structure of relationships and God's economy, make reference to angels, the glory of God, nature. Would you describe that as being somebody acknowledging a local custom? It doesn't seem like that. And then this person says it's the principle of subordination, women's subordination to men, not the symbol that Paul is teaching.

And I read that and I thought, how can he say this? If Paul just wanted to teach principles, he could have said, women, make sure you submit to your husbands. He is your head. And given principles like that, if that's all he wanted to do, that's what he would have done.

Make sure you submit to your husbands. But folks, Paul is teaching the symbol in this passage. There's no way around that.

Exegetically, he is telling men, don't put something on your head when you pray or prophesy. Women, make sure you put something on your head. You need to have that symbol of authority on your head because of these creation realities.

Now, indeed, Paul is teaching principles, but he gives those principles to teach the value and the need for the symbol. And so when I read a statement like this, it's the principle, not the symbol that Paul is teaching. I know that that statement is not an exegetically derived statement.

It isn't at all. He goes on to say the apostle is not laying down a universal principle that women should always worship with their heads covered. And so that's one example.

One other example is a guy who says this at the beginning of his discussion of First Corinthians 11. He says in approaching this passage, we must avoid two pitfalls. Number one, the rejection of the text in total or on the other extreme, a slavish literal interpretation of it.

We must rather extract the kernel of the nut, discovering the deeper meaning, the eternal truths hidden in the verses. Imagine somebody saying that with regard to what Paul says later in the chapter with regard to the Lord's Supper and say, well, let's not feel like we got to literally abide by these symbols and actually eat bread and drink a cup to portray these realities. Imagine someone saying, but it's the substance.

It's the deeper meaning. It's the principles that we really need to latch hold of. And we can lay aside the symbolism that Paul seems to be advocating here.

We can't imagine someone talking that way about what's later in this chapter. And I feel equally troubled over some who would say the same over this section. And here I am.

I'm actually a huge part of me wanting to hold this point of view. And yet I'm thinking I can't say this. I can't just come right out and say these types of things that some of these authors are saying.

I have a problem with this view, folks, because number one, there is no exegetical support. There's a second reason for my problems with this point of view. And that is this view is based upon two erroneous or wrong cultural historical assumptions.

See, if their view is not based on exegesis, what is the view based upon? Even by their own admission, what do they base their view upon? And basically, folks, what they base their view upon is not exegesis. It's not the text. They base their view upon cultural practice.

They make two cultural historical assumptions. And the first assumption that their view is based upon is this. And that is that what Paul advocates in 1 Corinthians 11 was the cultural practice of Paul's day.

And there are commentators that will actually state that. That, well, this was the custom in the city of Corinth. And this was the custom throughout the Roman Empire.

And so Paul is advocating what was the custom. And he's telling people in the church to heed that custom. Keep in mind, guys, that we're not just talking about whatever goes on in Corinth.

Whatever Paul's telling the Corinthians to do, it's what all the churches throughout the Roman Empire were doing. And so commentators will make this assumption. And that is they assume that what Paul is advocating here was the cultural norm.

Men didn't wear head coverings, and women did wear head coverings. And Paul is basically saying conform to that. Well, the problem with that is 1 Corinthians 11, verse 4. You remember us talking about that? Where Paul is saying to men, if a man has his head covered while praying or prophesying, he is disgracing his head.

He says in verse 7, a man ought not to have his head covered. When you look at those statements, and then you also look at some of the information that I gave you earlier, the cultural practice in the Roman Empire was for women and for men to cover their heads. In the context of religious exercises, it is abundantly clear that what Paul is advocating, at least in verse 4, at least in verse 7, is actually the opposite of what many, if not most of the men in the Roman Empire did from the emperor on down.

It is obvious that what Paul is doing is he is paying no regard to what the cultural customs were of his day. There is... Oh, you know what? I don't have it. I was going to quote from... Oh, I do have it.

Okay. One commentator, in fact, I have the book with me. It's a socio-rhetorical commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians.

This guy, in his commentary on this particular passage, is not at all trying to make a point about whether this is for today or not. In fact, it's a very unpractical commentary. His goal in this commentary, though, serves a valuable purpose.

His goal is to bring cultural information, historical information that we've gleaned from archaeology and literary sources and other sources to bring that to bear upon our understanding of passages of Scripture in 1 and 2 Corinthians. And this is his observation. He says, in view... Let me start here.

He says, Paul is not simply endorsing standard Roman or even Greco-Roman customs in Corinth. Paul was about the business of reforming his converts' social assumptions and conventions in the context of the Christian community. They were to model new Christian customs, common in the assemblies of God, but uncommon in the culture, thus staking out their own sense of a unique identity.

I would suggest that Paul places little stock in social or cultural conventions and a great deal of stock in the way God has made human beings and is remaking them in Christ. He says this on the other end of giving some of the cultural and historical information that I've already given you that has been gleaned from archaeology and from literary sources. He goes on to say, Paul is not interested in baptizing the status quo or normal Roman practice.

He is setting up new customs for a new community, and these customs are deeply grounded in his theological understanding of creation, redemption, their interrelation, and how they should be manifested in worship. And so what this author and what a number of other authors are indicating is when you do look at what the practice was of the Roman culture in Paul's day, at the time of his writing of 1 Corinthians 11, you see that some of what he says conforms to custom. Women did cover their heads when they were involved in any kind of leadership capacity and a religious or devotional exercise.

But what he says to men is actually the exact opposite of what the normal custom was in his day. There are some commentators that say that Paul is telling women to make sure that they wear a head covering because it would have been scandalous in his day for a woman to appear in public without a head covering. And yet, historical evidence indicates that that is not true either.

One author says this, public marble portraits of women at Corinth that have been found dating to this day are most frequently shown to be bareheaded. This would suggest that it was socially acceptable in a Roman colony for women to be seen bareheaded in public. Now, that is not to say that no women walked around with head coverings when they went out in public.

No doubt many of them did, but it would not have been a scandalous thing for a woman or a Christian woman to be seen out in public without a head covering. There is other evidence that would support this, but we don't have time to get into that tonight. And when I say evidence, I don't mean scriptural evidence, but historical and archaeological evidence.

But nonetheless, the view that says that this is not for today is based on the cultural assumption that what Paul is advocating here is actually what the cultural norm was already, and yet the evidence indicates that that assumption is historically not true. It doesn't bear up under closer scrutiny. The other assumption that they make is this, and this may be a little tricky.

Let's assume that what Paul tells men and women to do is exactly what the custom was. Let's assume that it is still a leap to make a second assumption, and that is to say that the cultural practice of the day was the basis for Paul's instruction to men and women. It may have been the cultural practice of the day.

Let's grant that, even though that's not true and that's not borne out by evidence. But let's grant that maybe it is. Let's pretend that.

Even if that was the normal custom that no man ever covered his head in Roman society, but all the women did, you're still making an exegetical leap to assume that was the basis of Paul's instruction regarding head coverings. And the reason that's an exegetical leap is because there's nowhere in this passage where Paul points to custom. He could have said, guys, this is what people do in our society.

This is what all the women do in our Roman society. And so just do this so that you're not scandalous in your behavior. Become all things to all men so as not to offend any of them.

And so this is what women do in our culture. They wear head coverings, so you need to do the same. He could have said that, but he doesn't do that.

In fact, what he does instead is he gives arguments that transcend any cultural considerations. Going to creation, the structure of relationships in God's economy, speaking of angels, the glory of God, nature, the way that God has divinely constituted man. And if in this passage he makes any reference to culture, what culture does he point to? The church culture.

This is what all the churches do. And all the churches do this based upon these transcendent theological reasons that transcend local or temporary customs. That's why some more recent commentators are saying that verse 4 indicates that it's very likely that some men were actually covering their heads in Corinthian worship services because that's what they did before they were saved when they prayed or prophesied or offered a sacrifice.

And so there were perhaps some who were doing that, and Paul is confronting that in verse 4. And Paul basically in verse 4 is saying, I don't care what the custom is in our society. The custom may be that all the men cover their heads when they pray or prophesy in these other religions, but even if all the other men in our society are doing that, even if the Emperor Augustus does it, I'm telling you, don't do it because if you cover your head, you are disgracing or dishonoring Jesus Christ when you pray or prophesy. Paul clearly, at least in verse 4 and verse 7, is in no way being guided by culture because he's advocating the opposite of what the cultural norm was.

So when we look at the view that what Paul teaches about head coverings is not for today, the problems that personally I have with it is that there's no exegetical support for it. And another problem I have with it is that it is based on two erroneous historical cultural assumptions that really do not bear up under closer scrutiny. So those are the problems that I have with that point of view.

Looking at the other point of view, and that is, is this teaching for today? Keep in mind, again, who is the burden of proof on? It's not on the one who would say this is for today, but nonetheless, let's accept that burden of proof. The arguments for the fact that it would be for today is that Paul nowhere makes reference to temporary local customs and the pagan community around them. Secondly, all of his arguments are based on theological realities that transcend culture, realities that do not change from culture to culture.

Also, another observation that's worth making is that technically, guys, technically, Paul may imply more than this, but technically the only thing he tells women to do is wear a head covering when you pray or prophesy. All right. He's not saying wear a head covering when you go out in public.

He's not even necessarily saying wear a head covering when you come to a worship service. All he's saying is when you get up to pray or minister publicly, make sure you have a head covering. Now, that's his narrow instruction and requirement in this passage.

That's kind of a narrow instruction to give if he's being guided by pagan cultural customs in his day. So that's worth considering. And also, to me, the most compelling indication that this is instruction that transcends temporary local customs is that Paul, in verse 4 and 7, actually instructs men to do the opposite of what the custom was in the Roman Empire.

And I ask myself, as I look at that, if Paul in his day... See, the situation was the reverse of the way it is right here in Riverside, California today. Back in his day, men and women wore head coverings when they were involved in a religious exercise. Paul says to women, you need to wear a head covering.

And yeah, you know, that conforms to what other people do in Roman society. But he says to men, even though other people in our society do this, other men cover their heads, I am telling you, don't do it because if you do, you disgrace and dishonor Jesus Christ. And my thinking is that if in verse 4 and verse 7, Paul is willing to go against the culture, what would he say today? If he were speaking to the church today, and it's opposite.

Neither men nor women cover their heads today, at least in this particular culture at this particular time. Do you think, in light of how he handles this issue in the first century, do you think Paul would look around and say, well, what does the culture do? And do you think if he told men to not wear a head covering, even though Roman men did in that society, what do you think he would say to women today? Do you think he would be moved by the argument that, well, other women don't do this in our society? It would seem to me that Paul would pay similar disregard to cultural customs today as he did in his instruction to men in 1 Corinthians 11 verses 4 through 7. And so personally, and I'm in process on this, but I would say that in the process that I'm in, that's where I am right now. I cannot dogmatically, unequivocally say this is exactly where I'll be as I think about it further and interact with some of you and do some more reading and interact with the elders about it.

But the best I can do is to say that this is where I am right now at this moment based on the reasons that I have given. Now, in light of that, I want to ask and answer a few questions. And the first three questions are kind of questions of protest that I might anticipate.

And they're valid questions, by the way, and I don't want to demean them at all. But questions that I can see maybe some people asking and I want to answer them. And then the remaining questions are more practical in their orientation, assuming that you buy into the view that this is for today.

One possible question would be, Milton, is it the substance what is important here? Why make such a big deal about the symbol? And I've already, in a sense, answered that. The reason that we make a big deal out of the symbol here is because Paul makes a big deal out of the symbol. It's not me talking.

Paul is not just teaching principles here. He's teaching symbols here. And so, yes, the substance is very important.

Absolutely vital. But Paul is saying because the substance is so important, so therefore is the symbol. So please at least understand if you're going to ask that question, don't ask it of me.

Ask it of Paul. He's the one making the big deal out of the symbol. Another possible question would be, Milton, this passage and this issue is surrounded and shrouded in so much controversy and differing opinions about this issue.

So why should I practice something that there is so much controversy about? And that's a good question. But my response to that would be, are you not aware that baptism, which is a symbol, has been shrouded in a considerable amount of controversy down through the ages? There's the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Some people believe that you're not saved until you're in the waters of baptism.

That's the moment you're saved. Some believe that the water actually serves as a vehicle, a means of grace by which your sins are washed away. There are some like us who believe that baptism is a symbol.

There are some who believe that baptism is not even for today. There's a church just a few miles from here that would teach that baptism, the ordinance of water baptism, is not for this present age. It is for an age that has passed away.

There are some who believe in infant baptism and others say, no, it's only believers' baptism. Among those, there are some who believe in immersion and others believe in sprinkling or pouring. And so there's disagreement over the meaning of baptism, the timing of baptism, the effect of baptism upon the soul of an individual.

There's controversy about all of these things. So do we say, well, there's just been so much controversy about this. You know, we ought to just lay the symbol aside because it's shrouded in so much controversy.

Well, none of us would want to do that. The Lord's Supper, which is another symbol. Are you aware of the controversy that has surrounded that down through the ages? I mean, what view do we hold to? I mean, there's the doctrine of transubstantiation that was advocated by the Roman Catholic Church.

There's also consubstantiation that was advocated by Martin Luther and the Lutherans that followed him. There is the Calvinistic view that is different than the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic view regarding the presence of Christ in the elements. There's the Eastern Orthodox view that is different even from the Calvinistic view and all the other views that I've stated.

Then there's the symbolic view. There are some who view the Lord's Supper as a sacrament. It is a means of grace.

It is a vehicle by which God's divine grace passes to his people. And there are others who merely see that as a symbol. There's a lot of controversy.

In fact, you read some of the literature that went back and forth between, I think, Luther and Zwingli during their day. They were very passionate, even getting into calling each other names, very heated arguments over this issue. So there's a lot of controversy about that.

Do we lay that symbol aside because of the controversy? Well, none of us would say that. And so at least keep some of those things in mind as you're wrestling through this. Yes, there is controversy.

There is a lot of disagreement on this issue. But we want to be careful to not allow those controversies to end up causing us to walk away from a text of Scripture and the symbolism and the practices that are taught there. Another possible question by way of objection would be, Milton, a head covering conveys no meaning in our culture today.

People in the world will not understand what it symbolizes. So why practice something that our culture won't understand anyway? That's a very good question. My response to that would be how many pagans in our world really understand the true meaning of baptism? How many of them really understand the true significance of the Lord's Supper and all that it truly and meaningfully symbolizes? Well, there's not a lot of people that have a right understanding in our world today of the Lord's Supper and baptism.

And yet that does not hinder us from practicing those symbolic ordinances or ceremonies. The fact is, I mean, head coverings are not understood in our world today. But you know what? We're not doing it for them.

Paul doesn't say wear a head covering in order to make the right statement to pagans around you. He brings angels into the picture. Wear head coverings to make the right statement to them.

And he also says wear a head covering to make the right statement towards your head. He uses that. But, folks, Paul here is telling us to do something.

And even though there may not be any understanding in our culture today of the true meaning of a woman, for example, wearing a head covering, that's not what guides us in baptism or the Lord's Supper. And it should not be what guides or limits us with this practice as well. You know what, though? Even though the world will not understand the meaning of this symbol, the church should.

And if the church doesn't, it's because this passage isn't being taught, right? There are many in the church that won't understand the symbol in many churches. But is that because the Scripture doesn't teach it? No, the Scripture does teach it. But this passage just isn't being preached perhaps the way that it should.

And also understand, you know, some of you kids in the youth group, you've got these hooded sweatshirts that say on the back, I believe, Don't believe the lie. Does the world automatically know what that means? Do they go, Oh, that must be the lie of salvation by works. And so, you know, that really impacts me.

No, they don't understand that. But you know what I've actually heard has happened with some of our young people. Someone at the mall is like looking at that and it's bugging them.

And they go up to the person and say, What does that mean? It's been bugging me. And so this young person has an opportunity to give explanation to what the lie is that that slogan is saying don't believe. And so you have an opportunity to explain that.

And so it may happen that somebody who doesn't know the Lord or is untaught may come to you and say, Why are you doing this? And you have an opportunity to explain this to them and the true significance and the meaning of it. So those are some questions that may be asked by way of objection. And maybe there's others, but I at least wanted to make sure I dealt with those three.

Let's assume that we were just going with the view that this is for today. There's a very important question that I know I've been asking and I don't have a solid answer to it yet. And that is, is Paul's teaching regarding head coverings for married women only? Or is he including in his requirement for a head

covering single or unmarried women as well? And by way of answer to that, folks, from a purely exegetical basis, I definitely believe it's talking to married women.

And I'm not convinced that it's talking to unmarried women. And my reason for that is in verse, verse three, Paul says, I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man. And it's kind of a plural idea.

Christ is the head of every single man. And then he says, and the man and the Greek word for man could be translated husband is the head of a wife. He doesn't say men are the head of women, but he says that the man is the head of a wife.

And it seems evident that at the very least, he's talking about the marital context here. And that when a woman becomes married and she now has this relationship with her head, which is her husband, according to this passage, he is the man who is her head. That at that point, at the very least, it would be important for her to have that symbol on her head, recognizing his headship.

Having said that, I don't want to automatically exclude the idea that single women may be included in Paul's thought here. In fact, some of you may be familiar with the name Tertullian. How many of you have heard that name? He was a very ancient church father who accepted the Lord around 195 A.D. And all of the writing that he did would have been between 195 A.D. and 220 A.D., because 220 was when he died.

And the Lord greatly used him in a lot of ways to combat heresy. In fact, the notion of God being one in essence and three in persons. He was the one who gave articulation to that in church history and dealing with heresies that were opposed to that notion.

But Tertullian, sometime before 220 A.D., wrote a treatise, and the title of it was The Veiling of Virgins. And his purpose in it was not to say, hey, you know, married women should wear head coverings. That was assumed in this treatise.

What he's trying to argue is that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 was including single women in his instruction. And as a part of his argument, he gives a number of exegetical arguments. But as a part of his argument, he says this.

He says, throughout Greece, the majority of the churches keep their virgins covered. Now, the idea is universally all of them cover their married women. But the majority of them understand Paul to be saying that the virgins or the unmarried women should be covered.

He then says this. So, too, did the Corinthians themselves understand him. In fact, at this day, the Corinthians veil their virgins.

What the apostles taught, their disciples approve. So whether Paul intended this or not, the ancient testimony of church history is at least that the Corinthian church understood him to not just be speaking of married women, but also of unmarried women as well. So but again, that's from history.

And that can only be so compelling. Our basis needs to be exegesis. But that's something that I don't really have an answer to.

But it's something that we can try to work through and study out further. Another question, folks, is this. A wife may be asking Milton, what if I'm convinced that I should wear a head covering and my husband says

he doesn't want me to? You know, maybe a wife sitting here ends up agreeing with what I'm saying.

But the husband says, no, I respect Milton. But and he's an awesome pastor and everything. But but I disagree with him and I don't think it's for today.

And so here's a wife saying, well, I think, you know, it is for today. My husband says it's not. My husband says he doesn't want me wearing one.

What do I do? My advice is don't wear one because you defeat the purpose. I mean, you don't want to say to your husband, you know what? You're telling me not to wear one, but I'm going to wear one anyway. As a side of my submission to you, just kind of defeats the purpose there.

So I would say if your husband says don't wear one, you need to submit to your husband and not wear one. So please understand that. Another question.

And this is a question, guys, that I don't have the answer to. And it's a loaded question. And that is, if head coverings are for today, on what occasion should I wear a head covering everywhere? Anytime I attend a church service or only when I minister publicly in a church service? What about when I go to a women's Bible study? What about a fellowship flock gathering in a home where there will be prayer and ministry of the word? And Milton, if we do take the view that this includes unmarried women, then what is our 16 year old daughter do while attending a chapel at Woodcrest Christian High School? Does she wear a head covering? Guys, I don't.

I can't even begin to give dogmatic replies to those those questions. There's going to have to be some latitude here. At the very least, Paul is talking to married women.

And at the very least, he's saying that when a married woman ministers publicly, she needs to have her head covered. That, at the very least, is true. Beyond that, there's just a huge area of gray that various Christians will come to differing opinions about who try to apply this today.

My younger brother is an associate pastor at a church in Greenville, South Carolina. And the church that he attends and works at is very interesting. It's a wonderful church.

His pastor is one of my favorite preachers of the word. He was one of my professors in college. And I have just gobs of respect for him.

He's a very careful exegete of scripture. And at their church, it's a church of, I think, about six, seven hundred people. And they hold the view that this passage applies today.

The only thing that they require is, I mean, if you go to this church, 90 percent of the women will be wearing some kind of hat or head covering who's attending the worship service. The only thing they require, though, is that if a lady comes up front to minister publicly to do special music, she's playing the piano, singing in the choir. They would require that she have some kind of covering on her head, because that's the very least that Paul is advocating here, if you do hold the view that this is for today.

However, though they don't legislate it, they do encourage women to attend with their heads covered. But they don't require that, and they don't judge people if they're not wearing a head covering. And the idea, this is where it gets complicated.

Let's say a woman singing in the choir, so she's ministering publicly, and so she feels like, OK, I should wear a head covering. What's the real distinction here? Is it the fact that she's standing up front and turning and facing everyone that now suddenly means she needs to wear a head covering? What about a woman sitting on the second row who's singing her heart out verbally along with the rest of the congregation? As you do that, are you not ministering publicly? And some of the songs we sing are actually prayers to the Lord. You're praying out loud along with other people.

And so that's where it gets really fuzzy. And there are some people who would say that not only when we minister publicly, but it just seems that it would be more appropriate if we just wore a head covering when we came to church, period. In addition to that, imagine in a spontaneous type of setting where you come to church and you're a lady, for example, and you're not wearing a head covering because you're not planning on being up front or ministering publicly.

And maybe you come to church that night and the pastor says, you know what, let's open up the floor for prayer and for testimonies. You, because you don't have a head covering, have removed yourself from the opportunity to be able to minister publicly. And so by wearing a head covering, you are readying yourself for whatever may present itself to minister in any kind of spontaneous way that the Lord may end up opening up to you.

So anyway, hopefully my view is clear. How do I want to state this? Just with where I am right now in the process of thinking this through, if I were a woman and I'm not, I would feel that just purely on an exegetical basis that if I were ministering publicly, at the very least ministering publicly before this congregation, just personally, I would feel like I would need to have some kind of covering on my head, whether that be a coffee filter or a camouflage thing from Coleman or a hat. And I'm being facetious there, but I would feel like I need to do that.

But at the same time, guys, you know, I am not ready yet to sit down with my wife and say, I want you to do this. We've got a lot more talking to do and I've got a lot more thinking to do to become as confident as I really want to be on this viewpoint. And so if you happen to disagree with this, you know, that's completely fine.

But I guess the biggest contribution I want to make is what I've tried to make today. And that is to make you acquainted with all of the issues. And I don't want anyone just casually saying, nope, not for today.

That's just what they did back then. You can't do that. I don't want you doing that.

If you're going to come to that viewpoint, you've got some work to do. And I want to urge you to do that, that work. Let me just say this and then I'll close out of like the 61 commentaries that I studied.

The vast majority of them properly exegete the passage, but then say it's not for today. Making the kind of assumptions that I've already explained to you. However, I don't want you to think that no other commentators hold this view.

One example of one commentator that advocates what I've expressed tonight is the scholar Bruce Waltke. If that name rings any kind of a bell, he's a theologian and a Hebrew scholar, one of the editors of the theological wordbook of the Old Testament. And he holds this view that I've suggested tonight.

S. Lewis Johnson holds this view and he articulates that in the Wycliffe Bible commentary. In fact, listen to what S. Lewis Johnson says. He says, some say that the custom was peculiar to Corinth.

Still others insist that the custom is not to be applied today. It should be noted, however, that each of the reasons given for wearing a veil is taken from permanent facts, lasting as long as the present earthly economy. Paul did carry his point for early church history bears witness that in Rome, Antioch and Africa, the custom became the norm and the final analysis.

And this is what I want to really leave you guys with. And the final analysis, the hat or the veil is not so much the important thing, but the subordination for which it stands is the important thing. But the presence of both is ideal.

You can come to church with a wonderful covering on your head and still not be subordinate to your husband. And what's S. Lewis Johnson is saying is I would much rather see a woman without the symbol, but having the substance than to see a woman with the symbol, but not the substance. But he then says, but obviously the presence of both would be ideal.

Some other examples, and I guess I won't read any more, but Frederick Godet, G-O-D-E-T, who wrote his commentary in 1889. He would hold the position that this is for today. The Expositor's Greek Testament seems to advocate this point of view that I've expressed tonight.

Another commentator whose last name is Ritchie, R-I-T-C-H-I-E, advocates this view. Charles Ryrie, even in his Ryrie Study Bible, makes it evident that this is his point of view. In fact, let me find this real quick.

He says in his comments at the end or at the bottom of the page with regard to this passage, he says none of these reasons was based on contemporary social custom. And so that's kind of a code expression. That's what all the commentators say who believe it is for today.

They will say exactly what Ryrie has said, and that is that all of these reasons, or none of them were based on contemporary cultural customs, but they were based on permanent facts. So there are some substantive scholars who do hold this view, although there are many substantive and respectful, highly respected commentators that would say it's not for today. But anyway, I say everything I've said today to begin a conversation that we can lovingly and in all humility and earnestly pursue together.

What I want to do is take a few minutes for questions as we begin this conversation, and then we're going to have to close it up at a certain time and continue the conversation in the coming days. Yeah, see, there's actually debate over is Paul talking simply about a church gathering or is he talking about ministry outside of the church? And there are some who say that he has to be talking about ministry outside of the church because he seems to be allowing women to prophesy here. And in First Corinthians 14, he tells the women to be silent.

And by the way, on that issue, wait until we get to chapter 14. Seriously, I've got a lot of study to do on that passage in chapter 14. It's a real monster.

It is so difficult. One commentator, evangelical commentator, says these words must have been added by a later copyist. And though I don't agree with that, it is that difficult.

So on that issue, give me time when we get to chapter 14. But there are some who say because of that, Paul says women can't speak in the church in the form of prophecy or whatever. And yet he seems to be allowing that here.

So therefore, Paul must be talking about verbal ministry outside of the church. I think that may be possible, but that's not quite necessary. Paul could be disapproving.

He could be just acknowledging this was going on in the church, public prayer and prophecy by women. And he may have not approved of it, but he'll deal with that later. Right now, he's just dealing with the head covering aspect of the issue.

So I would say that what Paul is referring to is any kind of public ministry that would certainly include inside of a church gathering. And it may include public prayer or prophecy or public ministry outside of the gathering of a church body. It may mean that.

And if that's true, that that opens up a whole nother can of worms. Do I wear a head covering now wherever I go? So that's the best I can do with that. But good question, Larry.

Yeah. And some this is one example where commentators are careless. Some say, well, this is what Jewish men did in Paul's day.

And Paul is saying something the opposite of that. We don't really know that for sure. The earliest evidence that we have is in the fourth century that Jewish men covered their heads.

The evidence before then is kind of ambiguous. So we see written evidence that Jewish men covered their heads as early as the fourth century. A lot of times what that indicates is, you know, how fixed and fast Jewish traditions are.

They don't change. And it's easy to make the assumption that, well, this must have been practiced in Paul's day. And it very well may have.

But we don't know that. We don't have evidence that verifies that. But it's a real possibility that even Jewish men covered their heads with a talif when they prayed.

And if that's the case, then. And by the way, they did that based on a faulty exegesis of the story about Moses bailing himself when he came down from the mountain. So it was a misunderstanding of the real intent of that.

But we don't know if that was in Paul's day or not. But it very well may have been. And that's another indication that Paul is he's not being concerned about what different people are doing.

If the Jews practice that in this day, Paul's actually telling even the Jewish men in the Corinthian church, I still don't want you to do it for these theological reasons. Gail, right. Right.

Yeah. Right. Yeah.

And that's a very good question. She's asking, well, we're supposed to pray all the time. So shouldn't we wear a head covering wherever we are? The reason I say public ministry is because if you're going to prophesy, you're prophesying out loud.

We're talking about verbal prophecy and prophecy is to edify the church. So there must be an audience. You don't go alone in your own little prophecy closet and just utter prophecies.

There's people who are listening. So that's why I say public ministry. The prophecy has to be a public proclamation of prophetic truth of divinely inspired revelation.

And so it's a natural connection to also assume that the prayer that's being spoken of is a verbalized prayer rather than, you know, a quiet private prayer. So at the very least, it's talking about verbal ministry where there is an audience hearing the prophecy as well as the prayer. But it could be understood as speaking of all kinds of prayer.

And we are supposed to pray without ceasing. But, you know, if you're going to take that too far, I mean, you're going to run to a problem. And I don't mean to be facetious, but I mean, this is when you're taking a shower.

You can't pray while you're taking a shower because you don't have a covering on your head. You know, so, you know, taking it to that logical extreme, I don't know that I would go with even quiet, private, silent prayer where there is no audience. I don't know that I would feel like that has to be included, but that may be your personal conclusion in the matter.

Yes. Right. Right.

What she's asking is what's the real intent of it? Is it the perception of the audience that sees you with the head covering? Is the value of it to make a statement to them? Is that what you're asking? Right. And that's a very good point. There are some, in fact, one individual that I talked to who holds the view that it's for today.

And she was a lady. She was telling me that if she went, for example, to a lady's Bible study, she would not feel like she needs to wear one. But if it's a gathering where there's going to be worship, public ministry, prayer, and men are present, then for her, the presence of men is a compelling element of it to demonstrate her submission to her own head.

And that's a valid consideration. But my question to this lady was, but Paul doesn't say anything about whether men are present or not. If there's anything said about the presence of anyone, it's angelic beings.

But nonetheless, that may be where someone ends up arriving at, that wherever there's a gathering of believers and mixed company and there's mutual ministry, public prayer, whatever going on, then in that kind of setting, I would feel like I need to wear a head covering. The what? Yeah, you weren't here this morning, were you? Just there are like so many different viewpoints and none of them are really overly compelling. And if you want to walk through that, I can do that afterwards.

Any other questions? Wow. Calvin? All you can do is I mean, if you if you hold the view that this is for today, all you can do is do what the scripture tells you to do. I mean, there's a number of things that that we're called to do in scripture that actually are very offensive to our culture.

But kind of there's a little bit of a collision with the fact that Paul in chapter 10 says, hey, become all things to all men and try not to offend anybody. You know that that can be kind of tricky. You know, if you're a missionary going to a culture where men, whenever they preach, have their heads covered.

And I don't know if there is such a one, but, you know, there there may be a collision of two competing things that are taught in scripture. And I'm sure in situations like that, you know, where there's not an easy call to make, you know, God may allow certain things in certain exceptional settings. But but like I wouldn't

view like if I go to a restaurant, if a woman goes to a restaurant and it offends someone that she has a hat on and they view that is rude and unacceptable.

You know, we I would say something that simple. We can't be in the business of doing or not doing something because it offends someone when we're clearly taught that in scripture. You're also assuming and it may be a valid assumption that Paul is telling women to wear a head covering wherever they go when explicitly he's telling them when you minister publicly in a worship gathering.

That's the narrow limit of his instruction, and it may apply to more, but at least that. So it may not even deal with wearing one at a restaurant. Say what? Yeah.

Oh, I see. Like praying at a right. Go ahead, man.

Yeah. In fact, I was complimenting a man this morning. I said, you know, just I admire you.

You deliberately thin your hair out on the top so as to have it more uncovered. And I just really respect that. He didn't really think it was all that funny, but someone you had your hand raised.

Yeah. It seems like at the very least, it would mean that if you're publicly praying or prophesying that, I mean, that's what Paul is teaching. If you are a woman sitting in the pew and I am praying and you are joining me in that prayer, it would be up to just your understanding of the passages to whether or not you would see that included.

I don't want to point the culture as being of any value with this, but at least just for whatever it's worth. The custom in Rome was for men and women to cover their heads if they were exercising any leadership in a religious exercise. And some of the images, like I said, they have groups of either men or women, and most of them don't have their heads covered.

But the one up front offering the sacrifice does. And I don't that shouldn't have bearing exegetically, but it may indicate some understanding that the Corinthians may have had because they may have been accustomed to that degree of having one's head covered when they were exercising leadership. But, you know, that decision on what to do with that, whether you feel like you need to have your head covered to silently join in in prayer with a leader who's praying or something.

That that may be what Paul is talking about, and you're going to have to work through that. Yes. Are you asking is Paul advocating that women, in a sense, do double duty, have long hair and a head covering? Well, yeah.

Huh? Well, then just have a longer head covering and would compensate. Yes. Right.

Yeah. What passage is that? Leviticus what? Leviticus 19:27. Yeah.

That may have had some influence on his thought, even though he doesn't express that outright in the passage. Michelle. Yeah.

Even though there's biological exceptions to all of these things, that there there is something even to the biology of women with a thicker head of hair than the average man and also being set up biologically to keep their hair longer than than some men than the average man would. Melissa. She's asking about the Nazarite vow in the Old Testament.

I can throw in Samson, where God specifically, who was and for all intents and purposes, a Nazarite. One thing about the Nazarite vow, a lot of times we have an image of a Nazarite as having hair just hanging down very long. I remember studying the Nazarite vow when we were in Acts chapter 18, and I didn't write down where I got this from.

But some source that I looked at indicated that the average length of a Nazarite vow was like 30 days to three months. It's not like someone was under a Nazarite vow for five years and they just got hair dragging on the floor. But you would be able to observe a Nazarite by just the fact that his hair was longer than it normally was and perhaps growing more unevenly and stuff because it's not being tended to.

But even a Nazarite, most Nazarites probably would not have appeared to have hair as long as a woman. But Samson did have very long hair by God's design. And how do I reconcile that with what Paul is saying? I can't.

And I feel like we're in a similar position. Remember when we were in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says, if you're married to a nonbeliever, don't leave your nonbelieving spouse. Stay with them.

Someone asked the question during a Q&A, but Ezra told the Israelites to divorce their pagan wives. How do you reconcile that? My answer was I can't. So that's, you know, God can do what he wants in certain times.

And in that case, maybe he wanted Israel to do something that's different than what he prescribes for the church. But when we and I know your question is just to try to deal with the discrepancy there. But in practical terms, as far as us guiding our behavior today, where do we go? Do we go to those exceptions in the Old Testament? No, we go to the clear teaching of the New Testament with regard to marriage or in this case with regards to hair.

But it's a good question. And I don't I don't have a way of explaining why God wanted Samson to have long hair, you know, in light of the teaching in 1 Corinthians 11. Yes.

Yeah. The thing is, the word tradition has the idea of handing down, handing over. And that word in the New Testament almost always just has a very strong idea of an apostolic body of teaching rather than it.

Here's here's convictions and and biblical requirements. And then here's a little area that's a little bit weaker in its obligation on believers. That's we would call traditions.

The word that Paul uses is it's a strong and powerful word, stronger than our word for tradition. And it speaks of the apostolic body of teaching. In fact, he prefaces his discussion in chapter 11 by using the word traditions.

And he is going to include the Lord's Supper in that body of tradition. And he commends them with the head covering issue, but does some correction, whereas he's then going to move right into the Lord's Supper. And there's every indication that whatever Paul considered to be tradition, he included the Lord's Supper in that.

And so the head covering issue, Paul would view as being in the same category as. The Lord's Supper and head covering issue would be in the same category as far as going to other passages of Scripture. Yeah, it's a little you kind of wish there was something else said about this somewhere else in Scripture.

But we want to be careful that we're not guilty of textualism. In other words, well, how many times does God say this? And if he says it a lot of times, then it must really be binding. But if he only says it once, it's not.

Our thinking ought to be one time is sufficient for it to be binding. However, I'm very sympathetic with with the thought that this is a issue that's so controversial that we really hunger for something else to be said somewhere else. And it would be very nice if that were true.

Right. But but think about it. Whatever questions we have today for lack of explicit teaching from Paul, they would have had the same kind of questions.

Perhaps Paul taught them more orally to deal with some of the questions that we're asking. But there was even contention about this in his day. And maybe that was part of the reason for the contention.

Jim? Yeah, he's asking about like American custom with regard to hat wearing there. It is up until recently that the best I can tell, and I've not researched this thoroughly enough, but the best that I can tell that it's been until recently that women did as a norm wear a head covering when they they came to church. Puritan writers wrestled over the issue, even for men, you know, wearing wigs like they did back then.

Is that a head covering? And I was reading one writer from back then who really wrestled with that. There's one old sermon from like a hundred or two years ago where the pastor is preaching about head coverings and he's not at all trying to prove they're supposed to do it. He's preaching against the gaudy nature of the competition and the showy nature of some of the hats and head coverings that the women were wearing.

So you look at some of those types of things and it seems like it was just an assumed thing. But the thing to keep control of is that women don't get out of hand and try to outdo each other and get bigger and bigger hats. So I don't know, but that would be worth researching.

But I didn't come across any literature that that investigated this from that standpoint. But that would be very valuable. Jerry.

Yeah. Back in Paul's day, the typical head covering was like just having they would kind of wear this thing over their shoulders, just kind of a loose fitting thing on the top. And in certain settings, like a religious exercise, they would take that and pull that over their head.

That was more the norm. That's how the Emperor Augustus is depicted as he has this bowl as he's sacrificing. Even the Emperor Nero is depicted with it's not a hood that he's pulled over, but it's actually a cloth covering that hangs down from his head.

And I think there's a band or something that holds it in place. So there probably wasn't like one particular fashion that that women had. Some maybe walked around with a scarf that they pulled over their head.

As far as today goes, you know, there there could be a whole variety, I would imagine. And I'm not really knowledgeable about women's fashions, but it could be something over their shoulders that they pull over their head or just wearing a hat. I don't know.

See, that's part of what I as as families talk this over and just and ask themselves, is this for today or not? What is our personal standpoint on this? And then if we do decide it's for today, how will we go about

applying this? What will we use as we're all having that ongoing conversation and sharing thoughts with each other? I would look forward to hearing from from from other people on what what they would like to do with that. Christian. So a man here more out of the motivation of just not wanting to mess with it.

No, I would think that what Paul be indicating is is not just nature was going to place a limit on how long your hair can grow, but that you would need to cut it if it's long. The idea is you look like a woman and wearing your hair in this way and having what obviously more resembles a woman than a man. Yes.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, you're going to have to determine that. And I'm still working through that.

I'm going to take two more questions. Yes. Right.

Well, with all due respect to those Indian cultures, I think what Paul would say is that in that case, what they're doing is they're not they're behaving in a way that's different than what nature would indicate. Now, that's what Paul would say if he says that nature itself teaches that if a man has long hair, that's a shame. There are situations like that where it's like, wow, you know, was Paul aware of these particular cultures and why would he say that? But all all I can say is what Paul says.

And Paul says that for a man to have long hair is a is a disgrace. Now, what you do with that is up to you. But that's that's clearly what he says.

Right. Right. Well, it's obvious Paul's thinking is not.

Well, just whatever happens naturally must be what nature teaches. Paul would say nature does cause hair to grow. But there's something in the way God has constituted man that if a man would heed that he would take the action of cutting his hair shorter, that that's a part of what nature would would teach.

Obviously, if if you just let nature and biology go, you're going to have long hair. But when Paul speaks of nature, he's not just talking biology. He's talking about some other element that would tell a man, go ahead and trim your hair so that it doesn't look like a woman's.

Yeah. Well, right now, I would definitely see it as a as a gray area. And we've not had a conversation about it as an elder board.

So I don't know what we're going to do with regard to this. I don't know what we would be unanimous on. I don't even know what I would really want to do with regard to this.

But I know at least at this point, well, we need to really just with loving consideration to one another. We may have people in our church that say, I don't think it is for today. And we need to respect that.

And then there may be others who say it is, but only in church. Others may say, no, wherever you go. Some say only when you're up front, there's going to be a lot of differences, perhaps.

And we glorify the Lord most not by total uniformity that's been legislated, but by our loving consideration for one another in spite of our differences. And so at this point, I would I would view all of this as a gray area. I've come to my own conclusion at this juncture and I'm still in process.

I don't know where I'll be a month from now, but, you know, I would consider this gray at this point. Right. Yeah.

If you come to our church and you're not wearing a head covering or even at this point ministering up front and not wearing a head covering, you're not going to be viewed as being contentious. But I just I want us to like what we're doing tonight. This is the way it ought to happen.

We're I just appreciate everyone's attitude. We're having open, honest, earnest, loving conversation about this. And I would want that to continue.

And let's try to learn together and see if maybe the Lord can direct us all in a way that would really give firm shape to what we know we should do. And and then what we ought to leave is gray. I want us to work towards that.

And I don't see us as being at that point right now. And I would also say that I want to encourage you guys to disagree with me. If there's something I've said tonight that you just say, man, I'm not convinced, I don't really believe this is true.

I want you to disagree with me. I want you to express that to me because I'm still learning and I can share with you what I've learned. But I'd like to hear maybe what you've learned or thought about whatever loopholes you may may have observed.

Because, you know, if we're doing that in a loving way with each other, then I think I think we can end up where the Lord wants us. Well, what a day. What a day.

Well, if you've got your children and kids club or the nursery, make sure you thank the the workers who have been very gracious in watching our kids during this time. But let's all stand together and close our time in prayer. Dear Lord, we have such small minds.

Our thinking is finite, whereas for you, everything is clear, you know, all things. And Lord, as we feel our way along and see through a glass darkly, may we be faithful to what we do see and be patient with those things that we don't see. And that we be determined to show humility and loving consideration to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Lord, may we have an enjoyable, earnest conversation about this subject that we're seeing is of some importance in your word. And I pray that you would lead us together as a church body to the place that you would have for us to be. Lord, as we look ahead to the days of this coming week, just ask that you would do mighty things in us and through us.

Help us to keep you, Jesus, and our relationship with you are number one and highest priority. And may we always relate to you on the basis of gospel realities. And as we relate to you in that way, out of the overflow of that relationship that we have with you, may we seek to show your love to others.

Minister to the loss and to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, to our spouses and to our children with the grace that we ourselves have received from God. Thank you for this wonderful day we've had. Lord, we give ourselves to you in the name of Jesus and all God's people said.

Amen.

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