

Text: 1 Cor 11.2-16

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

I. Introduction (1.1-9)**II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)**

- A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)
- B. Lack of discipline in the church (5.1-6.20)

III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)

1 Cor 7.1 ¶ Now concerning the things about which you wrote...

“The remainder of the body of this epistle deals with questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul in a letter. Paul introduced each of these with the phrase *peri de* (‘now concerning,’ 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).”¹

- A. Questions about marriage (7.1-40)
- B. Questions about things sacrificed to idols (8.1-11.1)

Last week our conclusions about “things sacrificed to idols” generated a lot of discussion among you afterwards. I wonder if there are additional questions or applications you might like me to address in light of those discussions?

- C. Questions about worship services
 - 1. Head coverings (11.2-16)

The opening commendation: “Now I praise you...” (2). Compare the openings of the next two sections:

- 11.17 “but” – same word as v. 2
- 12.1 “now”

What broad worship subject is Paul addressing in each section?

- 11.2-16 **head coverings in church**
- 11.17-34 **behaviour during communion**
- 12.1-14.40 **exercising spiritual gifts in church**

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 7.1.

What does Paul commend them for? **For holding to the traditions (i.e., apostolic teaching)**

How can we summarize what Paul wants the Corinthians to understand in v. 3? **God's hierarchy**

What kind of situation does Paul describe in verse 4-5? Where is the covering/uncovering taking place?

While praying or prophesying, i.e., in a church service

In vv. 5-6, Paul adds emphasis when a woman "prays or prophesies" with her head uncovered by calling it disgraceful.

Compare v. 7 and v. 10. What are the two "oughts" of these verses?

A man ought not to have his head covered

A woman ought to have her head covered

When it comes to the man's stance, what reasons are given? (7-9)

1. (7) **Man is the image and glory of God; woman is the glory of man**
2. (8) **Woman originates from man (meaning was formed out of man)**
3. (9) **Woman was created for man's sake (to be a helper to him)**

These verses are the hardest to understand in the passage. Some truths from creation that inform Paul's teaching:

1. God made man in his image to fulfill the dominion mandate. (Gen 1.26)
2. When God made Adam, he set him to work in Eden, to "cultivate it and to keep it" (Gen 2.15)

In other words, Adam was set at the task of dominion before the creation of the woman.

In exercising dominion, Adam reflects the image of God as the head of creation.

3. However, God saw that it was not good for a man to be alone (he could not fulfill the mandate alone), so he made a helper (ally) for him. He made the helper "out of man" and "for" man (Gen 2.18, 21-22; 1 Cor 11.8-9)

The woman also works in the task of dominion, but as Adam's ally (helper).

From my sermon on this in 1998: “The man is the pinnacle of creation, made by God for leadership. When he operates in right relationship to God and the rest of creation, man brings glory to God. ... *i.e.*, when man uses but not abuses creation, utilizing resources without exploiting them in his dominion over them.”

On the other hand, “When a woman operates in right relationship to God and man, she brings honour or glory to man and ultimately to the created order of God.”

Key principle: The woman completes the man, man cannot fulfill the creation mandate without woman.

What about the angels? (10) **What about the angels? Hard to understand, but it seems connected to God’s order in the universe and the angels taking part in that order. One possibility: angels cover their faces in God’s presence, so women reflect this stance.**

The “however” — vv. 11-12. What does God’s order (male headship, female completion) mean about the relationship between men and women in the human race?

They are interdependent, not independent

What is basis for the final argument Paul gives for female head covering in vv. 13-15?

This is the argument from nature, women naturally wear their hair longer than men [almost universal in human cultures].

What two things does nature teach by the relative lengths of male and female hair?

A man who wears his hair “like a woman” dishonors himself, whereas a woman gains glory (it is a covering for her). This supports the argument for a head covering. It is not a substitute for the head covering.

Finally, what is the meaning of v. 16?

Christians do not make this a matter of contention in the church; they all practice the same things.

Applications:

1. **Literal?** Some Christians take this literally, though very few in the modern era.
2. **Spiritual?** The purpose of this command is maintaining creation order, especially in the context of worship ["pray and prophesy"]
3. **Practical:** The most basic understanding has to do with church order and male leadership. Consequently, men take the lead in Bible believing churches. In marriage relationships, Christian women display their submission to God by culturally appropriate customs that indicate their submission to their husbands [taking their husband's name, for example]