

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Good evening and thank you for joining us this evening. We're in 1 Corinthians 11 if you would turn there in your Bibles please. Well tonight we find ourselves in some of the most contentious and controversial verses in all of the Bible.

Over the last decade, a sexual culture shift has shaken up our society. "Self-identification" of one's gender matters more now than biological reality does.

It's become common place to no longer categorize humans as male and female. Today, our society accepts a long array of "variations" – that we once called "perversions."

And if we're ever going to end this madness we find ourselves in, we have to go back to where it all begins-at creation. We have to return to Genesis and the creation account, and embrace the truth that God made us.

And not only did God make us male and female, He has a plan for each of the sexes. See despite what society says, gender isn't fluid, and up to our feelings. **SHOW PIC** Our gender is assigned to us by God. The proof is in the plumbing! **CLOSE PIC**

In the home and in the church, God calls men to be men and women to be women. And this also includes our roles that we're to function in.

This is Paul's word to the Corinthians in Chapter 11.

We're going to study verses 1-16, and the title of the message is God's Roles for Us.

LET'S PRAY

Remember, the folks in the church at Corinth had written to Paul while he was in Ephesus, and asked him a serious of questions...

Beginning in Chapter 6 Paul started answering those questions... should they sue each other in the pagan courts... how should Christian's view sex, what should be their attitude toward marriage and singleness, and could they eat meat sacrificed to idols? We've studied these topics in the last several weeks.

Now in Chapter 11 Paul takes up a series of questions related to conduct during church service. The next four chapters address abuses that were occurring in their church meetings.

In the coming weeks we'll talk about the practice of communion, and the proper use of spiritual gifts, specifically tongues.

But first the apostle Paul discusses authority in the church. He tackles the touchy subject of gender - the roles of men and women in the Christian church and home. Now most of the verses tonight deal with head coverings and hair, but the root of the issue is more than just hair deep-it's the creation order of our Creator.

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. Paul followed Jesus closely, so he didn't hesitate to tell the Corinthian Christians to imitate his walk with the Lord. He knew the Corinthian Christians needed examples, and he was willing to be such an example.

Paul simply did what he told his young associate Timothy to do **1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,[fn] in faith, in purity.**

See we never want folks to follow us-they're to follow Jesus. But as Christians we should have such a walk with Jesus that we can tell others to imitate us in our walk with Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. Paul's

words show us that not everything the church had been doing was wrong. There were both good things the church was doing, as well as improper things that were taking place.

This can of course be said of all churches. Even in the healthiest of churches you can find pockets of discord, conflict or shameless sin. Yet even in dying churches there are flickers of life, glimpses of hope, and those who have remained faithful even in the darkest times. Here Paul offers a word of encouragement to the Corinthians before he offers more instructions.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Before he even gets to this topic of head coverings, Paul reminds the Corinthians of God's authoritative order.

You don't have to spend much time in the Bible to realize that authority is important to God. Throughout the Bible God designates specific roles.

Even if we just look out our windows and observe nature we'll see God created all life with order and structure.

Our Creator definitely has an order: God the Father is head over Christ Jesus - Christ is head over the man - and man as verse 3 explains, is head over his wife.

To understand what this means, that the head of woman is man, we must spend time looking at the end of verse 3-the head of Christ is God.

Realize, the fact that God the Father is head over God the Son doesn't diminish Jesus in anyway, or make Jesus inferior. No in fact Jesus and God are equals.

Likewise, a man's headship in the home and in the church doesn't diminish a woman. Men and women are equals but they are not the same.

God the Father and God the Son are equal in nature and importance, but different in the roles they play.

Now this can be a little difficult to grasp, so let's go back to Deuteronomy. You remember the Shema is the great Jewish call to worship. The ancient priest would cry to God's people,

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

The Hebrew word translated "one" is "echad."

But it's a compound unity. My fist is an "echad" - one fist, yet five fingers.

Throughout the Bible we're taught there is only one God, but the one God exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We refer to this truth as "the triune nature of God" or the Trinity.

And each member of the Godhead has a specific role He assumes... The Father sits on the throne in heaven, as sovereign over creation.

The Son came to earth and became a man to redeem and save. And He will return and reign!

The Holy Spirit takes up where Jesus leaves off. The HS points people to the Son. The Holy Spirit lives within the believing heart and imparts God's power.

All three members of the Godhead are equal in importance - but distinct in the role that they play. The fact the Son submits to the Father, and the Spirit promotes the Son, doesn't mean the Son is

inferior to the Father, or the Spirit is less divine than the Son. All three members of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Spirit - are equal in nature, but distinct in their role.

This is one of the ways humans were made in God's image. The differences between men and women should display the harmony and oneness of the Triune God.

Again, as the Father and Son are equal, likewise men and women are equal in nature and importance, but they are distinct in the roles that they play.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. There was a time in America when every man who wanted to be taken seriously wore a hat in public. **SHOW PIC** That was simply the cultural expectation in the 1940's and 50's. Leave the house, grab your hat. Step indoors, remove your hat. There was an entire unspoken, unwritten 'hat etiquette' in those days. **CLOSE PIC** In fact, in the 1960's, when hat wearing began to fade, some older traditionalists felt it was scandalous for JFK to appear in public with his hair blowing in the wind.

The truth is, wearing a hat didn't make you respectable. Nor did wearing a suit and tie make you a professional. Combing your hair back or parting it didn't make a person either a conservative or liberal.

You know as well as I do that fashions change, styles flux, and what was considered edgy in one generation may be considered stuffy in another.

Without denying the reality that customs and manners constantly change in our culture, we also have to admit that what we wear, and how we present ourselves on the outside, often sends a message to others about what they can expect of us on the inside.

Now we may be completely wrong in our judgment of a person when we see how that person dresses, but in every culture what we wear on the outside communicates something about our allegiances, values, identity, and beliefs.

A man who wears a kilt is usually identifying with his Scottish ancestry. A woman in an apron presents the image of a homemaker. Again, our interpretation of that person may be wrong, but that doesn't change the fact that these cultural conventions intentionally or unintentionally convey character.

And as we read these next several verses about head coverings, Paul encourages the Corinthians to consider what their own style of dress might be communicating in their cultural settings. This question is of critical importance because as believers, we're to represent Jesus to the world. And the world will form many of its opinions about the Savior based on the conduct and visual images reflected in the lives of Christ's followers.

Let's read verses 4-5

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. The idea of a head covering was important in this ancient culture. To wear a head covering was a public symbol of being under the authority and protection of another person.

So men, because their authority is God, and as we'll see in a few verses God created man first, were to have their heads uncovered. But the women were to have their heads covered, signifying they were under the authority and protection of another—either a husband or a father.

Again, Paul's speaking of the cultural application of the spiritual truth of God's order.

The end of verse 5 likens women with their heads uncovered to those with shaved heads-which in that culture would be a shocking image. It's as if Paul's saying-if you're going to publicly communicate that the God ordained order in the family is no longer relevant to you, why not go all the way and shave off all your hair.

Let's put this in a modern analogy to help us understand. Imagine a woman comes to church and declares to her fiends 'as of last Friday, I'm no longer Mrs. smith. I've changed my name back to Ms Jones.

What's the first thing you'd think? You'd assume Ms. Jones and Mr. Smith were separated or divorced right? Why would you think that? Because in our culture the common practice is for a wife to take her husbands last name or a hyphenated name indicates the oneness of the marriage relationship. It traditionally reflects the deference of the wife to her husband's headship in the family.

Now you would think something is wrong in the marriage in this scenario, but it might be that the marriage of Ms. jones and Mr. Smith is just fine, but her words and actions are sending the wrong message.

A woman tossing aside her head covering or a man covering his head in public worship would also send the wrong message in that culture.

To be clear, this verse shows that women are free to pray or prophesy, but only when as they demonstrate that they are under the authority of the male leadership of the church.

6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

Remember, in Corinth 1k temple prostitutes flooded the streets each night. And it was pretty common for prostitutes to wear their hair very short, and they did not wear a head-covering in public. Their hairstyle announced to others just what they were and what they were offering. In Jewish law, back in Numbers 5 if a woman proved guilty of adultery had her hair cut off.

Notice that women must've participated in the worship of the Church at Corinth. They prayed and exercised spiritual gifts.

At times they prophesied or uttered spontaneous messages from the Holy Spirit.

What the women didn't do was serve as pastor and teach men! **1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**

That silence is in regards to teaching, for here we see it's perfectly allowable for the women to pray and prophesy.

We learned in Chapters 8-10 that the Corinthians were enjoying their liberties, their freedoms in Christ. This must also have been true of the Christian sisters in the Church.

In the pagan world of old - even in Judaism - and certainly in the Muslim world today - women were considered little more than the man's personal property. A wife was treated only a little better than a slave. It was Christianity that enabled and elevated the status of women.

It's ironic that when we study these passages, some folks accuse the Bible of male chauvinism or call Paul a "misogynist." That

couldn't be further from the truth. Christianity did more for women's rights than all the bra-burners and women-libbers combined.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This was a revolutionary statement that echoed loudly throughout the ancient world. In Christ women had experienced a new freedom. Christian women were equal with Christian men in terms of their acceptance, their significance, even their giftedness.

But remember, equal does not mean same.

God not only made male and female, but He assigned to each gender complementary roles for them to embrace. In fact, their faith would be tested by their compliance and obedience to their own specific roles.

The issue here in these verses isn't whether a man remembers to take off his hat before he prays... or how dare a Christian woman be seen in church without a veil... In and of itself, the hat or veil meant very little.

But unless the Christians recognized and complied with these cultural symbols, they would send the wrong message to unsaved world and possibly bring shame on the name of Christ.

Remember Paul's point in these chapters. At times a Christian should curtail his or her freedom for the sake of their witness. The ladies of Corinth were free to shed their veils, and the men could pray covered, but what message would that send to the surrounding culture? It would confuse, not convict. They'd be conveying the exact opposite of what God wanted them to model.

So for the sake of the Gospel, Paul suggests the Corinthian women keep the scarf on their head, and the men take off their hats when they pray. If not, their heart and attitude will be misunderstood by the culture.

But now Paul goes even deeper in the reasoning as to why this covering topic is more than just cultural.

7-9

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.” 8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man The account in Genesis tells us that God created man first **Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.** After tasking Adam with promoting God’s rule and furthering His creative work by cultivating and keeping the garden. God then fashioned Eve from Adams rib as a suitable helper **Genesis 2:22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.** She too would participate in the work alongside her husband.

In fact, the word helper is the first word to describe women in the Bible. **Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”** Scripture doesn’t describe a woman’s role as slave, or doormat.

See helper is not a term of inferiority, but of equality. In fact, it implies that Adam was insufficient to accomplish everything God wanted to accomplish. Eve was a necessary partner in projecting God’s glory through her husband into the created realm.

Genesis tells us God made woman for the man, not man for the woman. Man was created first, and the woman was derived from him to assist and complete him. Eve reflected Adams glory, mirroring his character, just as Adam reflected God's glory, mirroring his character before sin entered the picture.

So in verse 7 we see that a woman is the glory of man, not because she's inferior, but because she originated from him in creation.

Verses 7-9 explain that in the light of the biblical order of creation and the distinct, but inseparable roles of men and women as image bearers of God, women should be covered by male authority.

See Paul is now pointing beyond the physical head covering, a mere cultural symbol, to that which it represents-an attitude of submission to God ordained authority.

10 For this reason (God's created order) the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

So the head covering was more than just a covering, it was a symbol of a woman recognizing her role as not in authority.

Now the end of verse 10 is bizarre! Why because of the angels?

Remember angels saw 1/3rd of angels cast out of heaven because of Lucifer **Isaiah 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,**

I will be like the Most High.'

Apparently, the covering on the head of a woman who was praying or prophesying in the congregation was a visible sign that they were submitting to God's authority over them. Specifically, they were not rebelling against their position as women.

11-12

11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. Again the emphasis is clear—it's not that man is greater than woman, or more important. Men and women need each other, so there is absolutely no place for a "lording over" of the men over the women.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? In Paul's culture it was not proper for a woman to act as a spokesman for people with God by praying publicly with her head uncovered. To do so would be equivalent to claiming the position of a man in God's order.

Paul didn't think it was wise for Christian women to exercise their liberty in a way that would go against socially accepted behavior, even if they were personally submissive.

Today what is socially accepted is different than it was 2,000 years ago, but a woman's attitude is still crucial.

14-15

14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her^[fn] for a covering.

Because in general women wear their hair longer than men do, Paul thinks of this longer hair as "nature's veil." Paul reasoned from this fact of longer hair that God intended for women to have more physical head-covering than men.

You know, people generally regard the reverse of what is natural as dishonorable: In the man's case this would be long hair, and in the woman's case short hair

Does this mean a man with long hair or a woman with short hair is a perversion ? Not at all.

Men are usually taller than women, but this doesn't mean that short men or tall women are dishonorable. Again, women's hair generally grows fuller and faster due to the amount of estrogen in women, whereas men's hair tends to become thinner and to fall out faster because of the amount of testosterone in men. It's just how our bodies are.

We'll close in verse 16...

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. If any of his readers still refused to accept Paul's reasoning and decided to buck the system, and were inclined to be contentious, he informed them that the other churches followed what he had just explained. The other churches weren't being contentious in this regard. The men prayed with uncovered heads and the women prayed with covered heads.

Just as we've studied the issues of eating in idol temples and eating meat offered to idols, Paul dealt with the cultural practice when he addressed these head-coverings. As should be clear from his argument here, Paul didn't describe the covering of the head in worship as a major issue.

Rather he appealed to his readers to understand God's intention for men and women, and to maintain a custom, not to obey a command of God.

For you and I today the traditions we employ as we worship, including what we wear when we worship, are not as important as the reality of our worship: that we are truly worshipping God.

To be clear the issue of head coverings was cultural, but God's creation order is a creation principle. Gender transcends culture.

Gender matters to God! Not only do the Biblical roles for male and female nurture and order society, they speak vital truths about God's very nature.

From the first page of the Bible to the last, God reveals Himself in the masculine gender. He is never once called "God the Mother" or "God the Daughter." He is always "God the Father" and "God the Son." His people – Old Testament Israel, and the New Testament Church – are spoken of as feminine, but the Godhead is always portrayed as masculine.

Throughout the Bible, God consistently uses gender to display His relationship with His people. Israel was God's wife. The Church is the bride of Christ. This is why any violation of gender roles – any confusion between male and female – doesn't just affect the individual and families involved, it mars the picture that God is painting of salvation.

And there is significant pressure for Christians to compromise in these areas.

This issue boils down to biblical authority. And sadly, people today have lots of problems with authority... Citizens don't respect the government's authority. Students don't respect their teachers. Children lack respect for their parents. Employees disrespect their employers. People on the streets have no respect for the police. Even Christians have little respect for the Church.

It's important to ask: have these changes been good? Do we feel safer? Are we more confident in our culture? Have television and other entertainment gotten better or worse? In fact, our society is hurtling towards complete anarchy - the state where no authority

is accepted, and the only thing that matters is what I want to do. We're not far off.

The only way to stop it, is a return to creation. God made us male and female, and until we recognize and submit to God's design for gender, we'll never have any respect for any other type of authority.

To be clear this is not Paul's opinion. It's not my opinion. It's not anybody's opinions... It's God's design and decree.