

GROW
Symbol and Substance
1 Corinthians 11

I am so excited to be able to tell you a (not so much anymore!) secret: My youngest daughter Sammi is expecting a BABY! I am a FAN of babies, especially those that are of the Sayger/Casto/Campbell kind!! Now, I am not just blowing my horn this morning about this baby just because I have a good format (other than Facebook) to let you know about it. It reveals a higher purpose this morning. I want to tell you an important truth: **No baby has ever been born without the presence of a MOTHER!** Does this shock you? Probably not. Now, there is another truth that I want to tell you: **No baby has ever been born without the PRIOR presence of a FATHER.** Now, aren't you glad that you came this morning?

Seriously, there is a very deep purpose for sharing this with you this morning. In our passage today, we have to begin with a very important, and very sensitive, subject: Gender Roles. Paul did not back away from this topic in his day, and we should not back away from it in our day. I must admit to you that I have been agonizing over how to share this message because I want to be faithful to God and his Word more than anything else, but I also want to present this truth to you in such a way that you will be able to REJOICE in it rather than RESIST it! God's wisdom is our richest blessing, and he has designed creation in the order that best displays his wisdom. My prayer is that you will not only UNDERSTAND this wisdom as coming from God, but that also you will EMBRACE it for his glory and for your good! First, let's READ the first part of our passage for this morning.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 NLT

2 I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you. 3 But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 A man dishonors his head if he covers his head while praying or prophesying. 5 But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head. 6 Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, she should wear a covering. 7 A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory. 8 For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. 9 And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man. 10 For this reason, and because the angels are watching, a woman should wear a covering on her head to show she is under authority. **11 But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. 12 For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.** 13 Judge for yourselves. Is it right for a woman to pray to God in public without covering her head? 14 Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair? 15 And isn't long hair a woman's pride and joy? For it has been given to her as a covering. 16 But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that we have no other custom than this, and neither do God's other churches.

Some of you (probably mostly women!) may be ready to walk out right now, but I plead with you to hear me out. And relax; we aren't going to cut anyone's hair or hand out VEILS to all of the women when they leave today! In this passage, Paul is addressing some of the misunderstandings among the believers at Corinth that led to the abuse of their freedoms. This chapter is in the same vein of thought as last week when we talked about the Law of LOVE being greater than the Law of LIBERTY. Today however, it focuses on how that law affects the way that men and women (and later how the rich and the poor) relate to one another in the church.

It is important for me to teach you that Paul wrote this passage to a distinct type of CULTURE that immediately understood everything that Paul was telling them. He was not trying to introduce something in the church that did not exist in their current culture. In fact, if I were teaching this passage in the Middle East, it would be more readily understood and accepted because women in that culture still wear some form of covering to express their modesty and place in society. Men there do the same thing with different modes of apparel. We must understand this passage within the context of our current culture. This is not to say that we can just dispense with something if we don't like it, but we must apply it to what actually makes sense in our social setting, otherwise it communicates something altogether different from what Paul intended. I will do my best to try and help us see the equivalent symbols that could [express the PRINCIPLE and SPIRIT of what Paul was commanding](#) in his letter. In order to properly unfold this passage for you, we must apply 3 TRUTHS to everything that Paul is teaching us in these verses.

**Gender roles existed by divine plan BEFORE sin entered the world.
SIN corrupted God's divine plan for the sexes on earth.
Redemption in Christ reaffirms the creation order.**

Paul taught the vital importance of authority roles and responsibilities. (Vs. 3)

*The HEAD of EVERY man is Christ.

-Jesus is the authority over every man whether he accepts it or not!

-Men will answer to Christ directly in a unique fashion for how we follow Christ.

*The head of A woman ([not EVERY woman](#)) is a man. [[Refers to Husband/Father](#)]

-This is a reference to a man as PROTECTOR and LEADER!

*Adam abandoned his ROLE when he followed Eve's advice that day.

*God first talked to Adam after the sin. Now, IN ADAM (not Eve) . . . ALL are sinners!

*The head of Christ is GOD!

-Jesus is the perfect model of both SERVANT LEADER and SUBMISSIVE SON.

-Jesus willingly submits to the Father and ALL THINGS come under God's will.

*Thus, Male and Female roles reflect the RELATIONSHIP of the TRINITY!

-The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are EQUAL in worth and personhood

-Yet, each member of the Trinity is DISTINCT in their respective roles.

Paul taught the importance of properly understanding and humbly displaying our God-given GENDER and ROLE. (Vs. 4-10)

***First, remember the CULTURAL SETTING: [This MADE SENSE to them!]**

*HONOR/SHAME CULTURE [Korea]

*SHORT/LONG HAIR is RELATIVE in every culture. (My experience in Vilonia)

-In Corinth, a shaved head (or uncovered head in public) was for prostitutes.

*All Churches AT THAT TIME maintained gender-obvious dress codes. (Vs. 16)

*BOTTOM LINE: Maintain HONORABLE gender DISTINCTIONS/ROLES.

[I refuse to preach in a DRESS!]

***Second, note that Paul fully accepted women publicly praying or even preaching IF they willingly acknowledged their spiritual head. (Vs. 5, 10)**

5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. ... 10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

*Scripture ENCOURAGES women to express their gifts and abilities in the church life and meetings.

-Women are ESSENTIAL to the work of the ministry in the Church Age.

-At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all and all prophesied.

-In Paul's writings, women pray and prophesy publicly in church.

-Paul calls several women fellow workers in ministry. [Priscilla, Tryphena]

-Paul's letters have led to the EXALTING of women's place in society.

*"In Christ, there is neither male nor female!"

*Yet, Scripture nowhere allows women to serve as LEAD ELDERS/PASTORS in the church. **[This is not a prohibition of female leadership in govt., business, etc.]**

-Women leaders of ministries can serve under the authority of a Lead Pastor.

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Above all, I have not devoted space to the fact that in a Greek ekklesia, i.e., a public meeting, women were not allowed to speak at all.⁵⁰ By contrast, women in the Christian ekklesia, borne along by the Spirit, were *encouraged* to do so. In that sense, Paul was not trapped by the social customs of Corinth: the gospel, in his view, truly freed women from certain cultural restrictions. But that does not mean that *all* distinctions in roles are thereby abolished.

-Women must DISPLAY some SYMBOL of submission in the Church and in family.

*Certainly, MODEST dress and VERBAL affirmation of authority is fitting.

-This is true for married and single women.

*Wearing a wedding ring and taking a husband's last name are also fitting.

***Third, learn that Christian men and women must joyfully reflect the IMAGE of GOD in the way that they serve God and the Church. (Vs. 7-9)**

7 A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory. 8 For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. 9 And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man.

*Cultural Note: In Corinth, men covered their heads when worshipping idols!

*The uncovered head seems to speak of UNSHIELDED space between Christ/Man.

*Men AND women are CREATED in the IMAGE of God. **Genesis 1:26-27 NASB**

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and **let THEM rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, **in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

-Paul's teaching came from the CREATION ORDER. [Man first- then woman]

-Woman was created OUT OF and FOR man **[She is a creation of Completion!]**

*A wife is the perfect helpmeet for her husband.

*Mankind as a whole is incomplete without woman. **[And Vice/Versa]**

*Women reflect the glory of their earthly head by SUBMISSION. (Spiritual authority).

-**Husbands and Fathers:** The Way a woman reflects "your" glory is a sign of the success or failure of YOUR LEADERSHIP! **[A woman's beauty!]**

***Do you make their submission a JOY or a SHAME?**

-**Wives and Mothers:** The way a man EXALTS you and ENJOYS his role is a sign of the way that YOU are properly fulfilling your God-given role!

***Do you make their leadership a JOY or a PAIN?**

-Remember, IN CHRIST we are each affirmed as VITAL to one another. **(Vs. 11)**

11 But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. 12 For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, **and everything comes from God.**

Genesis 3:16 NLT

16 Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And **you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.**"

Ephesians 5:21-26 NLT

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. 25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.

Paul's teaching helps us to ACCEPT and EMBRACE the full meaning and importance of our God-given gender and roles in the home and the church. The symbols that we use to illustrate that are important and should not be easily dismissed!

There is ONE OTHER way that the members of the church in Corinth were violating the LAW OF LOVE through symbols in their meetings. It was how they acted when they took the Lord's Supper together. **1 Corinthians 11:17-22 NLT**

17 But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. 18 First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. 19 But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized! 20 When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. 21 For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. 22 What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

*This was a combination of the AGAPE MEAL and the LORD'S SUPPER.

*This was a matter of CLASS DIVISION between the rich and the poor!

-The rich people were bringing steak/wine and only eating with rich friends.

-The poor people were bringing bread/water and virtually starving together!

*This is why Paul said that they needed to EXAMINE THEMSELVES when they ate.

-Some were getting sick and even dying (because of God's Judgment!) (Vs. 29-30)

-ALL were commanded to HONOR the Body of Christ at the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:28-29 NLT

28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.

It is time for us to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. Before we do this, I want to open up these altars so that each of you can examine your heart concerning the things that we have learned today and make sure that you are willing to submit to God's Word today.

*Do you RESENT God's choice of gender/role for you in your life?

*Are you FULFILLING your God-given role currently in your life?

*Are you VIOLATING the spirit of UNITY at CHC in any way right now?

-FINANCIAL or RACIAL division?

Let's pray.