



Message Series Guide

Imperfect Church – I Corinthians

Part 17 – Headship and Submission

I Corinthians 11:2-16

This passage is probably one of the most difficult and misunderstood passages in I Corinthians because Paul uses words and ideas that he assumes his Corinthian readers will understand. However, the issues and questions Paul addresses in this passage fly in the face of the politically correct culture we live in today. Specifically, Paul tackles the issue of how men and women were to conduct themselves in public worship, respecting culturally relevant gender markers like head coverings, hair lengths, and hairstyles as a way of honoring God and each other. Paul explains the biblical purposes of headship and submission to emphasize that men and women were both created equally in the image of God but were also created uniquely for different roles.

READ:

I Corinthians 11:2-16 • John 6:38 • I Timothy 2:9-15 • Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23 • Colossians 1:18; 2:10; 1:19

- In verse 2, Paul commends the Corinthians for maintaining the traditions that he delivered to them. What traditions is Paul talking about?
- What does it mean that Christ is the head of man? What does it mean that man is the head of a woman? What does it mean that the head of Christ is God? Which one of these are most difficult to understand in our culture today? Why?
- Why is the idea that "everyone has a head" so important to understanding God's design for manhood and womanhood? What role does authority and submission play throughout the Bible? What makes submission to spiritual authority difficult for us?
- What was the root reason for women wearing head coverings in Corinth? What type of woman did not wear a head covering in Corinth? Should Christian women wear head coverings today in the church? Why or why not?
- Why is/was it a disgrace for a man to wear a covering on his head while praying/prophesying? Why is/was it a disgrace for a woman to wear a covering on her head while praying/prophesying?
- What does it mean that man is the glory of God and woman the glory of man?

DISCUSS:

- In terms of leadership, how are the roles of male and female often demonstrated in our culture today? Do Paul's instruction for headship and submission still apply to us today? How does our culture today try to skew the biblical roles of men and women?
- What in our culture achieves what head-covering achieved in the Corinthian culture? How can a man or woman today demonstrate their lack of headship and/or submission by their dress or behavior?
- Discuss how headship and submission can be properly demonstrated/reflected in the Christian culture today.
- How might we appropriately reflect the principle of headship in church today?

SUMMARY:

There are things people do (both in terms of dress and behavior) to deliberately blur the differences between women and men and, at heart, that's what Paul is concerned with in this passage. He wants both men and women to function in the role they were created to fulfill. – Claire Smith



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The Head of Every Man is Christ.

The Head of Christ is God.

The Head of the Woman is the Man

Headship and submission are voluntary commitments carried out in true conviction that God's will is best achieved by these means.

Men and women were created equally in the image of God but created uniquely for different roles.

Submission of equals is submission by choice, not by force.