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## 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 - The Role of Women in Church Leadership

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All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to 1 Corinthians 11.

Paul spent a year and a half of his life planting this church in Corinth in a city that was about as dirty and filthy in its practices as any city on the planet. And it wasn't until seven or eight years later - when he was in Ephesus for three years planting a church there - that word began to filter to him that this church that he had so loved was having problems, that somehow the city had gotten into the church. And so he heard it from some church leaders who had come to visit, some congregation members who had passed through the church in Ephesus, and a letter or more that he had received from there questioning Paul about what they were doing, and was this okay, and what should be done about it.

Both 1 and 2 Corinthians are letters of correction. We've mentioned to you several times there's at least one letter that Paul sent we don't have. But needless to say, Paul was determined to help this church that he loved stay on track with the things of God. And so the books are really good for us only because as a church we want to look to the Lord's direction as to how do we behave ourselves? What choices do we make when the body gathers together? And Paul takes many of the areas of concern that he was told about and then, rather than writing a sentence or two, he spends a long time on them; chapters on them. In fact, he started with division, and then he looked at some of the difficulties they had in using their freedoms to serve themselves and not be interested in what it might do for someone else. In fact, chapters 8, 9 and 10, that was all Paul talked about. Use your liberty in such a way it doesn't become a liability so that you don't mess up your witness to the lost or your ministry to the saints or the walk of your weaker brother or sister in the Lord.

Tonight we are starting in a new section in one regard. It is chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 are really all about life in the body. In fact he speaks only to the church gathering together like we do tonight. How do we behave ourselves? What do we prioritize? How do we manage and bring order to the gathering of the saints, if you will? And in the church leadership as well. So, as is often the case, and I think if you watch churches today, there is a great move amongst church people to modernize the Bible, to modernize practice. But the problem is cultures change; God's Word never does. So if there's one thing that doesn't move, it's what He has said. And they found themselves kind of butting up against, if you will, trying to expand their outlook rather than just submitting themselves to the clear instruction of God's Word.

One thing for sure: God that we serve is a God of order. He will say in 1 Corinthians 14, towards the end, "Let everything be done decently and in order." And God is certainly interested in that. In fact, in the universe, in our bodies, in the home, and certainly in

church function, God has established rules and practices that are best suited for us as His creation. I guess you could equate it to if we neglect how the Lord would have us to gather, it would be kind of like buying an appliance that comes with an instruction book and you don't bother to read it because you know everything. And so later on, when it says don't push button A before button B or the thing's going to be out of warranty and not work, and you do it anyway, the maker knows best. So we open the Bible because the Maker knows best how we should worship, how we should pray, why we should gather together, and so on. And so, in all of these things, we best function as God's people when we place ourselves under God's authority.

You know, when that centurion came to Jesus for his servant to be healed, he said to the Lord, there in Matthew 8:5-10, "I'm a man under authority, and I have soldiers under me." In his place of authority, he said, "I can tell one to go, and he goes, and another to come, and he comes. To the servant as well, 'Do this,' and he'll do it." But then he said to Jesus, "So I know that you don't need to show up at my house to heal my servant because I'm under your authority and I realize that everyone is. You just should speak the word; my servant would be healed." And the Lord was so moved by a faith that He said He hadn't found anywhere else. But he understood this issue of authority. Certainly under God's authority we can find God's best.

Tonight, for sixteen verses, God is going to speak to us about women in church leadership positions. I have cancelled my email so I don't get any emails (Laughing) until next month.

Verse 1, Paul says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." And I really believe that that should go along with the last verse of the previous chapter. I think we mentioned that last week. Chapter divisions, for that matter, verses, are put in there later on. They aren't ordained, if you will. They aren't divine. They are put in there by translators so that you can find your way around. But certainly Paul, in speaking about liberties last week (and we did three chapters of that), he just says, "Follow my example."

But then he turns to another topic, verse 2, and he said, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you." The Corinthians had written to Paul about, I think, the role and the place of women in church leadership, and Paul was thankful that they were interested in going along the route that he had taught them when he had established the church seven or eight, nine, years earlier; that they were really wanting to seek God on this subject, that they were interested in doing things right. And Paul, for all the trouble, was glad to see that they were interested in what the Lord had to say. So he blesses them for remembering. It's written in the perfect tense which is kind of like saying I'm glad that when you go to make any decisions, this is always something that's on your mind, and that you're interested always in keeping the traditions. And at least the word is literally truths that have been passed along through teaching. So with all of the negative things that the church was going through, Paul did obviously find some things he was happy about. And he commends them here. They believed God's Word. They didn't always follow it, and I guess that was the problem. But Paul said, "I thank you for asking and

seeking God, and let me go over it again for you so that you are comfortable.” Because, again, the Corinthian church – much like the church today – wants to modernize as opposed to submit to God’s plan and agree that He’s right.

So here’s the principle, verse 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.” I want you to “know” - the word is the Greek word for understand – this principle of authority and subordination that God has established. I think we would be wise to remember, as we go through this, that women in the 1<sup>st</sup> century – both in Roman and Greek cultures – were literally seen as possessions, not as people, much of the time. If you want an equal kind of concept, go read how the Taliban treats women in Afghanistan because it really is kind of the equivalency, if you will, to read across the way that 1<sup>st</sup>-century women would have found themselves in these cultures. The good news is Jesus came along, and He established the church and the individual and gave dignity back to the women as they deserved to have all along, and revealed God’s heart to them and to us all – that He loved us individually the same. For some, though, their freedom in Christ was being abused here in the church structure as God has designed it because there was this idea of bringing modernization again, and so Paul responds by saying that the role of a woman and a man in the church is not the same. And he will lay out a chain of command – maybe that’s the wrong word – a chain of authority or responsibility which is established by the word “head.” The word “head” in the Scriptures always speaks about authority. If Jesus had not submitted Himself to the will of the Father, salvation for you and me would not have been possible. If we do not submit to the Lordship of Jesus, we cannot be saved. If a woman does not submit as a wife to her husband or a woman in their position to the leadership of the church, the blessings that God would have for us will be set apart by our own choices as we violate God’s plans. And whether that is on a divine or a human scale, authority and submission to authority, are indispensable elements in terms of God’s order for man and oversight. Christ is the head of every man. Believe that? As Savior, as Lord, Jesus is the head of the church. And every man – general word for every believer – every one of us, He has redeemed (Revelation 5:9), purchased with His own blood. Paul said to the Ephesians (1:22-23), “And He has put all things under His feet, and He has given to Him” (Jesus) “to be the head of all things to the church, His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Jesus is the head of every man. By divine authority, Jesus is also the head of every unbeliever. They just don’t know it yet. Jesus would say to the disciples, in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and upon the earth.” So though they don’t acknowledge His Lordship, every man is under Jesus’ oversight, and one day they’re going to have every knee bow and every tongue confess He’s the Lord. Those who willingly submit to Him and His authority now constitute the church, the believers, the saints, the body of Christ. Those who don’t, belong to the world, to the darkness. They just don’t belong to the family of God.

So here, in the context of church leadership and oversight, it is the man as opposed to the woman who is to represent Christ and lead. Application in the Scriptures is made in this authority structure both in the home (from a husband and wife’s relationship) and in

the church environment (in terms of spiritual leadership of a pastor or an elder). “Christ is the head of every man.”

Then we read, “The head of woman is man.” We know, spiritually speaking, that standing before God, we have all been saved from our sin, and we stand before Him cleansed and whole. From the standpoint of faith and our relationship with God, there is no male or female in the sense of advantage, if you will. In fact, we are “joint heirs with Christ.” That’s what Paul would write (Romans 8:17). However, in terms of role or function, God has made the woman to be supportive and under the authority of a man in terms of marriage and in terms of church leadership. There’s no distinction made in the Bible between men and women based on spirituality, personal value, ability, intellect or devotion. None. In fact, some women, many women, are superior to men in these areas that we would count important. God has established this authority structure to maintain order and to help us to function in a way that God has created for us to find His best. If you are an employee tonight, you might be very wise compared to your boss; far more skilled. In fact, if it wasn’t for you, your boss would be out of business. Women are often better Bible students. I have found over the years as a pastor that many women drag their husbands to church. You can tell by the way they sit and listen. The women lean forward; they’ve got a Bible. And the guy’s like this.....they’re here but not on their own impetus. They are more devoted to the Lord. They might be better educated. And yet she’s to serve under the authority of her husband who now has the responsibility to answer to the Lord for the spiritual well-being of his wife. Is that an advantage to the woman? I think good, let him have the problem. Not such a bad deal at all. The policeman who is behind you with his siren on may not be as godly as you are, may not love his family as you do, and yet he has been given a place of authority; and according to God’s will, we’re to submit to him as unto the Lord. He has placed him there to keep order, to reward good, to punish evil (Romans 13). That’s his role. God has a divine plan. That role is most often, like I said, delineated in the husband and wife relationship and in the leadership that you find when God establishes leaders in the church. The husband is to be the head of his home. If he is not taking that place, he will answer to the Lord. The woman is to submit to her husband as she would to the Lord. If she doesn’t do that, she’ll have to answer to the Lord. If you’ll both do that, you’ll find God’s best.

1 Timothy 2:11-14, this is what it said, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” And then Paul says this to Timothy, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Now these are Paul’s letters – the first of two – to Timothy as he sent Timothy to take over a job as a senior pastor in Ephesus. And Timothy, at the time, was about 40 years old, and the church was a mess. They were overrun with Judaizers and false teachers, and for Timothy, who wasn’t your aggressive Type A get-in-your-face guy like Paul, it was overwhelming. But Paul wrote him a lot about church life, and these things, I think, pertain to what we’re studying tonight.

There’s no word given in the Bible where a woman can’t teach in school, can’t teach in her home or in the marketplace or in the public arena. But what it does say is that there

isn't really a place for a woman to step in and bring leadership to a church in terms of doctrine. It's not a question of equality because God created us in His own image. "Male and female made He us" (Genesis 1:27). There's no difference in our creation or relationship with God; there's only a difference in our roles or our responsibilities. This is all about calling and authority that God makes known. So what does Paul say? "I'd like them to be learners, to learn." The word means to be a student or a disciple. In the church setting, the best role that you can take as a woman is to learn God's Word and draw close to Him.

When it comes to spiritual oversight, God has placed the man in a responsible position to spiritually lead, establish doctrine and church order. In the Old Testament, there are no women kings. All right, there's one judge – Deborah – but she didn't really want to go; she sent a guy named Barak (you might remember that name) instead. There are no women priests; there are no Old Testament women authors; no woman in the Bible has an ongoing prophetic ministry, though there are many who are called to prophesy. And it's the same thing in the New Testament. It's not a matter of inferiority or somehow you get your dander up, "I want to defend myself." No. It's a matter of calling, how God made us. I know today the movement is to mess up all the genders, but the Bible's pretty clear on male and female. Don't get caught up in the nonsense of the day. It is not inferiority; it's responsibility. The Lord honored woman. In John 4, it was a woman who was the first one Jesus revealed Himself to in the Bible as the Messiah. Many women traveled with Jesus. It was a woman to whom Jesus first made Himself known after the resurrection. But there is no provision made in the New Testament for women pastors (although we want to be modern) or teachers or women evangelists on the road or women elders (elders being those who take care of the spiritual well-being of a church). There are no women New Testament authors. There are no recorded sermons of any woman in the Scriptures, period; because when the church meets, the responsibility of the spiritual leading of the church God gave to men. Why? I don't know. Look around you. You go, "Maybe that's a bad idea." But the Lord knew what He was doing, and I'm comfortable with doing that. And, again, it is a matter of authority and calling. And so Paul, here in verse 12, says to Timothy that a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man. That's the Timothy passage.

If the pastor oversees and teaches doctrine as he should, it is proper to have a sister in the Lord come up and share Scriptures and be an encouragement. But the role of the spiritual leadership, the dividing of the Scriptures, the teaching, has to fall on the shoulders of men. It is that God has chosen. In fact, Isaiah the prophet will write (in chapter 3:12 of Isaiah) that one of the problems that was a contributing factor of the judgment of the nation is that these men had stepped away from leadership, and women had begun to lead the nation. In fact, here's what it says, "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." It was just a reversal of roles. It wasn't something that should have taken place, but it did.

For the spiritual leader and the overseer, and that of helpful support, it is God's design. And the creation process is a proof of His headship principle. Notice verse 13 (1

Timothy 2), “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” So, look, even the role of leadership is defined by the Lord in the creation process. It’s used to argue from the state of headship. And it’s the same verses that we’ll see in verse 8 and verse 9 in a few minutes, where we read (look at verse 8, 1 Corinthians 11), “For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” And we read that Adam was formed first. He had a pre-eminent position. Eve was made to support Adam. It wasn’t good that he was alone. There was a dependency and interdependency; however, from the structure itself, Adam was positioned in a place of leadership, responsibility. And when it came to the sin of eating of the fruit, it wasn’t Adam who was deceived; he knew what the consequences were. He was obligated to teach his wife that. Whether he was clear enough or not, I don’t know. But she was deceived. He joined with her, and it was this reversal of roles - where she stepped away from the submissive role - that caused this fall. You will read that in the book of Genesis; that marriage, because of sin, is almost doomed from the standpoint that there is this struggle between submission and authority. The woman is tired of the guy being in charge; the guy loves throwing his weight around without loving his wife. And this conflict is constant. Until you get to the New Testament and you find that, from the Lord’s standpoint, if you’re both saved, you can both return to the roles God made you for, and marriage can be a blessed place to be. But the husband is no longer ruling; he’s responsible, but he’s loving his wife like Christ loved the church. And the wife, whether she feels more spiritual or not, is allowing the Lord to work through her husband who He has placed there to be the spiritual head of his home. So Paul, when he teaches Timothy, says the same thing; that the man has to be in a place of authority.

So we’ve read here verse 2 (back to 1 Corinthians), “The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” We know that Christ IS God. Yet, His humanity and in His humanity, He emptied Himself of that authority, of that position. He did His work by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was our example of how we should live our lives. He submitted always to the will of the Father. John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” John 5:30, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Those are all statements made from His humanity when He emptied Himself of the prerogative that He had as God so that He could be our example. Which is the same discussion – if you’ll stop and talk to a Jehovah Witness on the corner – that you’re going to have with them because they don’t believe Jesus is God. And it’s a discussion that you might want to have with them because if they can come to knowing Jesus as God, they’re going to leave the rest of it behind.

So men must lead and love, following Jesus’ example while representing His headship; and women need to be willing, in love, to see the role that their husbands or their pastors, in that role; pray a lot for them. It’s a responsible position. I goof around a lot. My wife’s favorite sentence to me is, “That’s not very pastoral.” (Laughing) In fact, I’m

going to put that on my gravestone, I think. But I take this seriously. I want you to know the Lord and His ways.

So the principle is, here, established, if you will, in verse 3. The principle is stated, "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."

Well here's the application, then, of the principle. It says this, verse 4, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 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. 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." Okay. Principle in verse 3 now applied to the culture in Corinth and the practices of the day in the church. We know that these are not just simple words about hair and covering, but they are supportive teachings that will help us in the context regarding biblical doctrine.

Let me give you a thought to mull over in your mind. There is a biblical law of interpretation called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics....the word "hermeneutics" just means interpretation. How do I properly interpret the Bible? Well, when hermeneutics is applied to church practices, it requires a couple of things for them to become church doctrine. Number one: that Jesus taught on the subject explicitly. Second of all: that the early church practiced it in all of the churches that you find established and that Paul, in the epistles, specifically began to give directions regarding those practices. Here, this whole issue of women and their heads covered is only mentioned here; they aren't designed to teach us a principle by which the church should practice. It is Paul reaching into the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century to say, "Here is a place that the principle of verse 3 is being neglected in your desire to begin to modernize the culture and the practices." It is Paul using what they were doing to teach them what God would have them to do. And remember, this whole concept of liberty and obedience.....he had spoken a lot about idols and meat and the illustrations were from daily life to send home spiritual, eternal truths to the church as a whole.

So he says, in verse 4 and in verse 5, when women pray and prophesy....just by definition, praying is you speaking to God; prophecy is God speaking through you to man. The target audience is different. Prayer is to the Lord; prophecy is from the Lord to man. Right? The woman with her head covered, for it would be a shame for her to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered. In fact, if she wouldn't cover her head, she might as well shave it. Do a Sinead O'Connor or something like that. What is the emphasis here? Well, in context, it is a local reference to the Corinthians, and it is an application that justifies or reinforces the principle of verse 3; and that is that the woman should receive and understand in this practice that she's subservient in her place to the man who has the responsibility. That's all it says. And it was a practice in the early church. And, by the way, it wasn't just putting on a hat. It was putting on a veil to cover the entire face. It was born in 1<sup>st</sup> century, the fact that married women covered their face out of modesty so that only her husband could see her full beauty. That practice

was carried into the church. Women began to veil themselves to recognize that they had a spiritual covering or authority over them. Additionally, the only women in Corinthian culture who did not cover their faces and shave their heads were the prostitutes. Thousands of them. You can find pictures and drawings of those who worked every night out of the temple of Aphrodite.

But, in the church, the local custom reflected the divine principle. The woman would be covered; the men would not in the church. To not be covered would be a disgrace to her; it would be like saying, "I don't recognize the authority that God has given to me under those who are leading the church." And so it would be a place of rebellion.

Now, in the context, they were trying to modernize. "Hey, I'm free to not put that stuff over my head. I'm tired of that. I'm not going to wear it anymore." Well, you're free to do that, but that's not Paul's point. Paul's point is: in the name of freedom, those who were rejecting this as nonsense and refusing to wear these things to church were, in many ways, rejecting the concept of those things that it represented. And they were identifying themselves, in their decision, with the adulterers in the world who rejected spiritual truths to begin with. Look, dress has always been cultural. It has no spiritual significance. Yet, in this case, it was liberty that began to defy and rebel against God's ordained principle, if you will, as a place of submission, and it was being trashed in the name of liberty. Paul's point is we must know our role before the Lord and work it out because there're people, again, around us who might very well misread what we're saying.

So, here's the principle in verse 3 applied, if you will, in the church in verses 4, 5 and 6. And then here's his defense, starting in verse 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. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." Now Paul argues that these Christian women should continue to honor the custom for it accurately reflects their position before the Lord and reveals (verse 3) their obedience to that truth.

We read verses 7, 8 and 9, and we say to ourselves, "Look, they were both made in the image of God." And you're absolutely right. There's no.....guys are no better than the girls. We need the women, the women need us. But here Paul is showing that man was made first, placed in a position of ruler and overseer, and woman was made from the man (Genesis 2:23). "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she will be called '*issa issa*' because she came out of '*is*.'" I know. It reads better in English, doesn't it? She was made as a helpmate. "I will make him a helpmate." Even the process of creation displayed the roles God had for both of us, if you will. The fall, as we said, was Eve stepping out of her place of submission; Adam not taking the role of leader. Their refusal of their assigned roles led to their consequence and all.

But, like I said, once you get to the New Testament, when you get saved, the Lord can really begin to restore that which sin has taken away. So you get to Ephesians 5:21,



and it says, "Submit to one another in fear of the Lord. Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. A husband is to be the head of his wife, as Christ is head of the church; He is the Savior of the body. Love your own wife." And so it went.

The head cover of the believers in this culture symbolized her willingness to recognize her authority. That's really where it started. And Paul said that's appropriate for the culture, as an example.

And then he adds, in verse 10, besides the issue of creation in order, he mentions the angels. And I suspect it is a reference to those angels (who you first read about in Genesis 6) having occupied with men, and a race of giants was created. They left their place as angels. In fact, they seem to be the angels, biblically, that are locked up in a place called Tartarus. It's only mentioned a couple of times in the Scriptures. But these are angels that actually went beyond, left their place and all and created this race. It was Peter who said, in 2 Peter 2:4, "If God didn't spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved to judgment." And then Jude writes about "the angels that left their proper domain, left their own abode. He has reserved in everlasting chains," Tartarus, "for the day of judgment" (verse 6). Except there were some angels who were locked up because they moved away from the place that they were called to as angels. They inhabited, if you will, bodies and had children upon the earth, and this race of giants followed.

Needless to say, the comparison is the same. You've got to find your life where God puts you. So Paul was instructing the women to be submissive in their God-given roles and not act like the angels who were assigned by the Lord and chose to rebel against Him. But it's an issue of: the culture changes but the understanding of the principle does not.

So here's the balance, verse 11. "Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman, but all things are from God." Look, if Satan can't get you to deny or disregard God's Word, then he will often seek to have you misinterpret or take to extremes things that God never intended. So Paul - he realizes this is going to be a tough bunch of verses to read, I think - reminds them of the equality and the mutual independence of men and women together. The authority of man is delegated, not earned. It isn't deserved; it's assigned. And it has to be used for God's glory, in love. And the bottom line is we all depend upon the Lord, and we need each other. Oh, Adam was created first, but had Adam not gotten together with Eve, that would have been a real short story. So it is especially true in the Lord. Men and women have different roles, but they're not less important. Women are not called to lead or be teachers of men, but I think they are most often the influencers of men.

There are two reasons in my life that I can be sure of: I was married to a godly woman - the most godly woman I've ever met - so that I'll stay godly. And I was made a pastor so I'd show up in church on a regular basis. (Laughing) God has fenced me in, man.

At home and abroad. It's a true story. The influence of my wife's life on my spiritual life is beyond compare; I suspect yours as well.

And the balance from Paul and then finally here's the encouragement to apply this principle to the church. Verse 13, "Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" In that context, no. "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. But if anyone seems to be contentious" (or argues about this), "we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God." This isn't a rule, this is cultural. And one final comment from creation and the glory of long hair is that long hair naturally reveals the divine principle: a woman's covering is her long hair, a man can go without hair apparently. Men go bald. And, by the way, having a background in microbiology....men go bald, women rarely do. And if they do, they're the first ones to get a wig. Guys probably not as much. Again, the lack of proper interpretation of these verses has caused tremendous difficulty for people. By nature, men and women have completely different physiologies. There are....let me get into the hair of this....there are three stages of hair development. There's formation, there's growth, and then there's fallout. Male testosterone speeds up the cycle to the third stage quickly. He goes from formation to rest to fallout. Female estrogen slows that process to stage three, and it rarely moves to stage three, and if it does get there, it moves rather slowly. It was the way that God made us. To translate that, culturally most societies where women are and men, men have shorter hair than women. There are cultural exceptions. But Paul is speaking to a culture in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the experience of the culture and will end up by saying, "Look, we have no big rules about this, but traditionally this is the way that these things are applied." How long is long hair? I don't know. Just longer than men. And most cultures have that distinction. It is lost in some of them.

But here's Paul's point: authority and headship and submission have differing symbols in different cultures. The key, however, is that God established them in places of service, in marriage, and in church leadership. We do not have, and we will not have here, women elders or women pastors. We've had people leave our church because they called us, "We don't have a woman pastor." No. And neither does the Bible. And then they get angry with me, and they go somewhere else. I don't care how many denominations want to rewrite the Bible. The Bible is the last word.

So we want to do things God's way and believe we are equal but have different callings. And Paul....I like verse 16 because Paul literally says, "If you want a sympathetic ear to hear your dissent, you're not going to find it with me. You're not going to find it here." We believe in the leadership of men, the submission of women, and the leadership of the church. I love to hear women give their testimonies. I love to have them come up and share their faith. But they're not going to be giving us direction from a doctrinal standpoint. It is just that which God has laid upon men. And I would tell you it's a huge problem, it's a huge burden. If the culture dictates head coverings, then fine. We will cover up for we believe the submission area in the heart of man. We'll just do what God says. And that's where Paul ends up.

Now, what's the problem in Corinth? Well, you know what the problem is. The girls are showing up and going, "I'm not wearing that stuff. I'm a believer!" Paul said, "You're messing everything up trying to be xxxxx, having that freedom again till it disrupts."

Ahead of us, in these next few chapters of Corinthians, is a long teaching on communion and the love feasts; a tremendous amount of teaching on the use of vocal gifts in the public assembly. Vocal gifts. You know, it's one thing to have a gift of tongues and interpretation in a public assembly. If you have a gift of administration, you're probably not going to be able to exercise that in a public assembly. "Excuse me, I'd like to file for you all while you watch. I'm an organizer." It's just vocal gifts. That's what had gotten out of whack, if you will, and that's going to be covered along with the motivation for those gifts in chapter 13. And then chapter 15 is kind of Paul's conclusion that our hope is in a risen Christ. If He hasn't risen, we have no hope. But if He's risen, we all are going to rise. And chapter 16 is really just Paul saying hello to a bunch of friends who he loves and hopes they are doing well.

So, clear enough? Any complaints? Don't bring them up right now, but.....call the office in the morning. Ask for Wade. (Laughing) All right? Thank you very much. Shall we pray?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
September 26, 2024