

## **What's Up with Head Covering in the Bible?**

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## Forward

This book is intended as a quick survey of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1 -16 and a brief examination of the main objections to the need for a woman to cover her head when she is engaged in spiritual activities such as praying.

This book is intended for Christians who have read the Bible and have some background in the scriptures. Hopefully, I have provided enough scripture for new Christians who may be less familiar to be able to follow my thoughts.

The book was not intended to be a scholarly work or treatise on the subject. I am not a Greek scholar, nor do I hold degrees in theology or Bible degrees of any type. I have, however, devoted uncounted hours in study, meditation, and prayer on the topic.

I am indebted to the work of countless others who have written and taught on the topic.

In all things, seek God first with prayer for discernment and wisdom in understanding His word.

God bless!

## Brief Personal Background

This brief history is intended to let the reader know about factors that may carry some degree of influence on my opinions (and not to sound like boasting about my family's "Christian" pedigree).

I was raised in the Lord's church.

My grandfather was an elder in the small town church where he lived.

My father and uncles served as shepherds in various congregations where they resided.

The majority of the family professed Christ, though some with more passion than others.

Family events, holidays, and special occasions were always intermixed with Bible discussions.

Although my grandmother wore a hat to worship services from time to time, there was never any emphasis given to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16. The practice of her wearing a hat appeared to be the result of the fashion, culture, and society of her time. None of the women (my mother, aunts, or female cousins) veiled or covered their heads at worship or in private prayers.

My wife, her mother, and her siblings hold the similar view that an external head covering is unnecessary.

Growing up, my parents encouraged me to read and study the Bible. Upon questioning why the requirement for a woman to wear a covering was not followed, my mother explained that the woman's hair serves as the covering. Therefore, a veil or artificial covering was not needed.

I share this background because it illustrates that I could hold a preconceived bias in my thinking by the way I was raised.

## Do You Have Any Blind Spots or Biases?

In making an honest study of head covering, the first question that we need to ask is, "What is the answer that we hope to find"?

If we do not recognize our own internal biases and predispositions, then we are unable to guard against doing our own will as opposed to the will of the Creator. The ways of a man (woman) seem right in their own sight. Proverbs 21:2

Let's be fair, we live in the United States where a woman can wear literally anything (or nothing) with general acceptance (just visit Starbucks). If a woman wants to wear a head covering, then she can certainly do so. Therefore, the reasonable conclusion is that most women do NOT want to wear a covering.

The question remains - why do Christian women not want to wear one?

Does the practice signal something to others that a woman may not want to communicate?

A woman may be concerned that others will see her as old fashioned.

A married man may fear that other people will conclude he's an overbearing (she only covers because he coerces her). He is a controlling jerk!

The father of daughters may want to avoid the public criticism that he is "emotionally abusing" his daughters.

Others may fear being labeled as overly legalistic or self-righteous.

Some Jews in the days of Jesus refused to acknowledge Christ because they were afraid of being cast out of the synagogue. Today, some may fear being ostracized by their own local church.

I admit to having held predispositions that clouded a truly objective look at the topic. When the subject would come up, I immediately jumped to "what I knew was the truth!"

Before even hearing what a proponent of head covering had to say, I discounted them as not knowing what they were talking about. I was mentally writing them off as untaught or confused before listening. This was not a fair and objective search for truth, but rather me holding tightly to what I already believed.

This bias amounted to an unwillingness to *genuinely* search for the truth. I was happy to hold fast the "truth" that I had "inherited" from my family and Christian friends.

The search for genuine truth requires brutal honesty that comes with a price. We have to ask ourselves, are we truly willing to pay the cost?

The task can be *challenging* (and especially when we want to reach the conclusion that seems right in our own eyes)!

### Who This Book Is Not For

Let's cut to the chase. I don't want you to get halfway through this book to realize that "I am one of those!"

Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible - I hold fast to the belief that the Bible was written by men inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. I further affirm the Bible is error free and exempt from mistakes.

Sufficiency of the Word - the Bible is sufficient for us to read, understand, and answer the questions pertaining to eternal life and Godliness. Nothing else is necessary.

Having said this, I use a Greek interlinear, Bible dictionaries, and word studies to figure out what the words meant at the time the New Testament was written. I use commentaries to hear what others may have to say, but I retain my own right to determine the meaning of the Bible as best I can. I don't surrender my views to anyone believing that it is a solemn duty to open my own eyes to see and open my ears to hear what God has revealed.

Context is Critical - I assert that the correct understanding of the Bible requires reading the scripture in the context that it was written. The goal is to figure out what God intends and accept whatever is found.

A good example of the necessity for the proper context is found in John 6:53-60. Jesus taught in the synagogue that they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life with Him. Upon hearing this, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

Jesus' statement in John 6:53-60 must be construed in the figurative context to arrive at the proper meaning.

Without the proper context, the literal words require cannibalism. This was not the intent.

Old Testament and New Testament - the Old Testament composes 39 books that serve as a tutor to show us foundational information necessary to come to the correct understanding of the gospel of Christ in the New Testament. Galatians 3:24

The Old Testament provides the background for creation, history of mankind, that all men

fall short of the glory of God by sinning against Him, *and that all are eternally lost without the perfect sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, my Savior.*

The Old Testament teaches us much, but we are only subject to the New Testament.

God Given Gender Roles and Ranks - God created mankind (human beings), male and female, in His own image. Men and women have equal value before God in personhood. Men are sons of God and women are His daughters. He loves all! However, God assigned different roles and ranks to men and women that many in our culture refuse to accept. God made the man the head of the wife in the home and ordained male leadership in the church in elders and deacons. A man is superior in rank to the woman, but the woman is equal to the man in value in the eyes of God.

Paul's Writings Are Inspired - The entire Bible including the writings of the apostle Paul in the New Testament are inspired or God breathed. Paul did not hate women. He was not a sexist, misogynist, male chauvinist, or any other pejorative term that some call him. Paul's teachings are from God through the Holy Spirit. Don't blame Paul if you don't like what he said.

The analysis in this book rests upon these foundational beliefs and principles. If you disagree with me on any of these, then you will likely not care for what I have to say.

I would love for you to read the book cover to cover, but I recognize that your time is valuable. Therefore, it is important for you to know my core beliefs before you use valuable time considering what I believe to be the truth.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians: The Big Picture Context

The New Testament contains two letters to the church at Corinth, a group of believers who seemed to experience a lot of serious problems and issues.

Paul previously lived in Corinth for about 18 months. Acts 18:1-11

While there, he worked with the brethren to develop these men and women into mature Christians. As such, we should read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians in the context that Paul knew these people and that *they knew his teachings and manner of life.*

The epistle attempts to correct numerous problems that came up after he left Corinth and provide us with information that we need to know today.

Without making an exhaustive list of the issues addressed with the brethren in Corinth, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians deals with:

- divisions in the church,
- sexual immorality in the church,
- marriage, divorce, and remarriage,
- use and misuse of spiritual gifts,
- worship practices,
- the resurrection of Christ,
- not suing brethren in the church,
- idols and eating meat offered to idols, and of course, the matter at hand,
- the instructions for head covering for men and women.

Significantly, Paul never so much as hints that any of these matters *are trivial, unimportant, or superficial*.

*Using human wisdom, man has determined that some of these things deserve less attention and consideration than others.*

Female head covering has been discounted as insignificant and immaterial by the majority of professed Christians in the United States.

Those who oppose female head covering sometimes point out that none of the other letters in the New Testament address any expectation for a woman to wear a covering - this is true.

The only place in the New Testament that provides any discussion of the proper headdress for Christians is 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 (excluding the scriptures about braided hair and modesty not part of this study 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:3-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:9).

However, we should note that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians also addresses other subjects not found in Paul's writings to the other churches (or discussed by other writers in the Bible). For example, where the brethren were identifying with specific ministries by name. "I am of Paul" or "I am of Cephas". 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:12-13

Not filing a lawsuit against your brother was condemned in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:1-8 with Paul's chiding was there not someone wise enough among them to decide a squabble. No other epistle suggests that it is sinful to sue your brothers or sisters in the civil courts.

The specific abuses of the Lord's Supper identified later in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-34 are only mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians.

Thus, Paul confronted the church in Corinth over multiple issues that seemingly were not present in the other churches. We are left to sort out whether these concerns and warnings apply to us (or just to those in Corinth at the time the letter was written).

### Head Covering Today

The head covering instructions for women to cover their heads when praying or prophesying are considered to be nonessential, secondary, or unimportant by the majority of Christians today.

Of those Christians who say that women are obligated to cover their heads, most are quick to say that the failure of a woman to comply will not result in her loss of salvation. However, they do not supply a verse or scripture to back up the position that a woman's salvation remains unaffected by the refusal (or neglect) to follow Paul's admonitions.

The command for men not to cover their heads when praying or prophesying is honored by virtually all denominations. On more than one occasion, I have personally witnessed scolding or rebuke to a man who wore his hat into a church building or did not remove his cap for prayer at a ball game or rodeo.

Let's take a deeper look and try to uncover (pun intended) what we are supposed to discern about head covering in the Bible.

### Puzzling to Me For Years

For years, it puzzled me why Paul spent 16 verses on the topic of head covering *only to end the discussion with* "but as to women, it doesn't really matter anyway" (my words, not Paul's).

Really!

Make me read all that stuff, then tell me the woman's hair is the covering!

It doesn't take 16 verses to say, "Men don't wear anything on your heads. Ladies you're just fine so long as you have hair."

Isn't what I wrote a whole lot shorter *and far simpler* to read and understand?

I sometimes pondered, "Why did Paul use half the chapter to write what can be said in two sentences"?



As you might expect, I was taught in sermons and Bible classes that Paul wrote 16 verses to tell us the woman's hair is her covering *with the caveat - don't be argumentative about something that doesn't matter.*

That encapsulated everything there was to know!

The end!

Maybe you have had similar experiences at your church (or like me have wondered about Paul spending so much ink on a trivial point).

It was also peculiar that Paul placed the head covering rites immediately before the improprieties in partaking of Lord's Supper. Strange indeed for Chapter 11 to cover two subjects; *one that doesn't matter* and the other of utmost importance.

Is it possible the head covering rules are a little more significant than we were taught?

I encourage you to approach the subject without relying too heavily upon any man (especially me!), but in reliance upon God for wisdom and understanding. He promises to give wisdom if we ask!

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”  
James 1:5-6 NKJV

### Why I Changed

For decades my opinion was that a woman has no obligation to wear an artificial covering on her head when praying or prophesying.

From time to time the question would come up, but with a quick study I always reached the same conclusion that there was no necessity.

In restudying the question, I would typically take about an hour to reread 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 (and skim a commentary or church pamphlet). I always came to the conclusion that it just didn't make any difference.

Conveniently, this conclusion always matched what I already thought!

Believe it or not, I have identified close to a hundred different objections or reasons that are given.

Categorically, these objections fall into the following general classifications, but trust me, there are countless off shoots, splinters, and variations:

1. Hair is the covering, thus no need for an external covering.
2. Just a cultural tradition or custom, not a command, thus no longer applicable.
3. Anyone who believes head covering applies today is just being contentious.
4. Mama was a faithful Christian and she didn't wear anything.
5. The notion that a woman has to wear something on her head is silly and doesn't make sense. *"If I don't understand why, then I ain't gonna do it!"*
6. In Christ there are neither male, nor female, slave nor free, therefore all Christians are the same.
7. Regardless of the correct answer, it's NOT a matter of salvation.
8. The feminist lens world view - women are equal to men. Therefore, it is wrong to single out women with a special requirement to wear a covering.
9. Majoring in minors - female covering is an insignificant practice that majors in minors.
10. We don't practice the holy kiss, laying on hands, etc. If we aren't going to do these, then women don't have to wear a covering.
11. Head covering in Corinth was to avoid looking like a prostitute.
12. A wedding ring is the substitute for a head covering for married women today.
13. I don't know any Christian women That cover; We Can't All Be Wrong!
14. The Dialogue theory.
15. In Paul's time, the woman's hair was believed to be her testicles. With modern science, we now know better.

Yep, you read that last one correctly! The woman's hair is her testicles.

Like I said, there's a lot of potential justifications for the woman who doesn't want to veil her head *or the husband who doesn't want his wife to cover her head.*

For me, I just want the truth and the faith and conviction to accept it.

### We Don't Practice the Holy Kiss and Other Stuff

As I already said, female head covering is opposed for all types of reasons.

The first knee-jerk objection often heard is, what about the other verses (that we don't follow) such as the holy kiss, laying on hands, anointing the head with oil, etc.

Let's be clear, these objections are a diversionary tactic. These excuses spring from emotion, not from a logical analysis of the scriptures on head covering.

When these objections are raised, I now respond that “two wrongs, don't make a right.”

Just because there may be another command (or passage that is ignored) is not a justification for violating the head covering scriptures.

Is it okay for me to stay perpetually drunken because you are a gossip, *really?*

Is it acceptable for me to be an adulterer since you tell white lies?

I encourage you to focus on the question at hand *without pointing to other conduct that you personally believe may be possibly sinful.*

Maybe we should also study the other topics such as the holy kiss, etc. - but be clear - *admitting from your own mouth a violation of what you know to do* seems a very poor excuse.

In Matthew 12:3, Jesus said, “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” NKJV

Comparing what the Bible says regarding the reasons for head covering with the verses that mention the holy kiss gives us insight.

The Bible gives multiple reasons for the practice of head covering. The holy kiss is not described in the Bible with any theological significance.

We find the holy kiss in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:20, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:12, Romans 16:16, and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:26, and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:14.

In every passage where the apostles say to give a holy kiss, the context is a greeting (or saying goodbye.)

The emphasis is about giving someone a warm welcome (or a heartfelt sendoff if they are leaving).

The significance is about letting the individual know that we truly have an agape love for them.

As such, the holy kiss should not receive as much weight as scriptures with theological significance.

Head covering (while only mentioned in one book of the New Testament) comes with Paul giving several reasons for the practice.

Paul says women should cover their heads in prayer and prophesy (and men should not) . He goes on to identify the reasons and tell us why.

These reasons have a symbolic meaning associated with the instructions for head covering.

We will cover this in much greater detail a little later.

At the end of the day, the holy kiss seems to be about letting someone know that you are genuinely happy to see them (or truly sorry to see them go).

### Moral Obligation

One of the things that I discovered in my studies (that I had never heard before) is that head covering *involves a duty that is owed to God*.

The aspect of this duty is highly relevant to the proper understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 and equally critical for both men and women.

“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.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 7-10 NKJV (Underlining added)

Verses 7 and 10 use the word “ought.” I underlined these in the verses for you to see.

I had always read “ought” like it meant the better practice or something that might be a good idea.

Like the dentist telling me that I “ought” to floss and brush my teeth. Sure, it makes sense and it’s probably good advice, but I have gone with out flossing on many camping trips without any consequences.

When you find out that “ought” involves a responsibility that you are expected to fulfill, the

head covering directives take on a new significance.

In Greek, “ought” is defined: to owe, be indebted, i.e., obligated to rectify a debt. The word encompasses our moral duty or responsibility to God. Strong's Concordance 3784 [e]

Observe the word “ought” in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7-10 is applied to both men and women - each sex has a distinct and different moral obligation. These requirements apply when praying or prophesying.

Duty is crucial to a proper understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16.

Knowing these instructions impose a moral obligation *that we all owe to God* should take our inquiry into the serious nature of head covering to a heightened level.

The awareness that God describes His expectations as a “duty” or something that men and women owe to Him should create in us a genuine desire to reach the correct conclusion.

What comes to mind when we talk about morality or our moral obligations in the scriptures?

Well, Christians have a moral obligation not to be arrogant or prideful, not to commit adultery, fornication, homosexuality, theft, covetousness, and the list goes on. The violation of these obligations is serious!

Romans 13:7 uses “opheilo” (the same word in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7-10 translated “ought”) when Paul tells the brethren to render therefore to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, *and honor to whom honor*.

Notice the verse in Romans refers *to paying* the moral obligation that is owed (and not to withhold what is due). The text clearly teaches that it is wrong in God’s eyes not to pay your taxes, not to give honor to those owed honor, etc.

A derivative word “opheile” is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:3 regarding the conjugal duty or responsibility for husbands and wives in marriage. Each spouse owes a duty to satisfy the sexual needs of the other.

Not paying the debt or the fulfilling the marital obligation is a sin. [Oh yeah! I know the “My body, My choice” crowd disagrees. ] The truth is that it’s not our body. We are, more or less, just tenants living in the body loaned to us until God says it’s time to move out.

Throughout the Bible when a moral obligation is broken, then the scriptures are clear that

change or repentance is demanded.

If you are living in fornication, stealing from people, lying to folks, or breaking the commands, then you have to change. A genuine Christian may fall down at times, but they will not merrily continue in sin (not even that grace may abound). Romans 6:1

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11, there is the responsibility on the part of men and women to comply with the specific instructions to each gender. Think of it like the moral responsibility of parents to feed their children. If you don't feed your kids, then you are not meeting your moral duty.

Prayer and prophesying involve entering into the spiritual realm where God and Jesus sit.

The spirit realm is Holy, Sacred, and a place that we are only allowed because God graciously lets us come in. When we enter into the presence of God, we must acknowledge our assigned station showing full deference to our head.

In the secular world, we have a symbol of decorum that is required when a judge enters the courtroom. Everyone in the court stands to signify the judge holds a higher rank and to give honor to the office.

The failure to stand up is a sign of disrespect and shows dishonor to the judge (and also the legal system as a whole).

Why stand up?

Why not just pat our heads and rub our tummies?

The "why" doesn't matter. What matters is the observance of the rank and honor shown to the judge by standing up. In fact, obedience without understanding actually serves to honor the position, even more.

The military requires the person with the lower rank to come to attention with a salute when in the presence of an officer with a greater authority. The action is a means of showing honor and respect.

The act of giving complete attention including the designated hand signal affirms the officer carries the higher rank. The salute acknowledges the lower status by the one giving the salute.

In both the courtroom or in the presence of a commanding officer, there is an obligation to show deference by the required signal.

I by no means wish to reduce or minimize the awe that we should have before God in prayer or prophesy with these secular illustrations. He is HOLY!

Upon entering the spiritual presence of the Most Holy, we are told to show a physical signal recognizing where we rank. The man is to remove any covering on his head. The woman is to place an external covering over her head. These are the signs that God chose!

Why head covering?

Just like standing up when the judge enters the courtroom, we don't have to understand "why." God said it and that should be sufficient for us.

The bottom line is the Almighty has the right and authority to select any symbol or sign that He wants. He chose head covering.

#### Men These Instructions Apply To You Too!

Fascinating to me personally - the text applies equally to both men and women. But, in our modern day conversations about these instructions, the discussions always center on what does it mean for women in the church.

*Do not miss the point that Paul first tells the men that it dishonors Christ to have their heads covered in prayer or prophesy.*

The instruction that men must not cover their heads has been universally accepted across the church and the various denominations that claim to follow Christ. The instruction to men against covering their heads is not viewed as purely a cultural practice applicable to only the Corinthians. Nor is the prohibition against men wearing a cap or hat seen as some horrific and oppressive discrimination against men.

**Men, let me be loud and clear, covering your head dishonors Christ, *who is your spiritual Head.***

“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.”  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:4 NKJV

Look carefully at verse 4, does this sound like something that doesn't really matter?

A man showing dishonor to his Head is serious and this should be a real concern for a man.

In the secular world if a man dishonors or disrespects his supervisor, the job probably isn't going to work out very well. Built into the fabric of every organization is some form of hierarchy founded upon respect, honor, and a recognition of authority. It's obvious (and almost unspoken) that bringing dishonor to your boss will get you fired!

If we can see the significance of honor in the workplace, *how can we possibly dismiss the importance in dishonoring Jesus Christ, the Head of man?*

Every man will have to decide for himself, but I don't want to risk dishonoring my Head and especially with something *very easy to resolve like taking off my cap or my hat to pray.*

As a man, do you want to stand before Christ on the judgment day *with the full need for His cleansing blood having dishonored Him all your life praying with a hat or cap on your head?*

Not me!

#### Cultural Objection - The Covering Issue Was Local to Corinth

The cultural objection contends that women were told to cover her heads *because of the culture or social norms in Corinth at that time.* Therefore head covering no longer matters.

The cultural view of the Bible is really nothing more than a new hermeneutic.

Hermeneutics is a big fancy word for the method that we use to explain the Bible.

The theory behind the cultural hermeneutic is that you must understand the culture of the people to whom the letter was written to be able to comprehend what is meant.

While knowledge about the culture of the time may be helpful in some cases, *this knowledge is not essential to a complete understanding of the scripture under study.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:2-4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible stands on its own.

If information outside of the Bible is necessary to understand what is written, then the scriptures are not sufficient.



Inserting “knowledge” about the culture at that time from external sources results in a departure from the sufficiency of the scriptures to stand on its own. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:2-4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17

Said another way, *if we are required* to have “outside knowledge” about the culture to properly understand the Bible, then the scriptures do not supply everything we need for life and Godliness.

This is a fine line distinction that is easily blurred.

In other words, if we need to understand the cultural context in order to apply scripture, then 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:2-4 is untrue.

There is nothing inappropriate about using knowledge of history and culture to better comprehend Bible teachings. However, it is wrong to begin to implicitly add things to the Bible that are not written there.

The deception that occurs is insidious in that it happens slowly and without recognition that it has occurred. Like the proverbial frog in the pan with the temperature slowly rising, we fail to see that slowly and surely the scriptures are being changed by us.

Initially, the gathering of information outside the confines of the Bible appears helpful, useful, and aids us in seeing deeper meanings.

Unfortunately, like a drug this external information becomes “a necessity” for our understanding of the scriptures. We begin to add things into the Bible from culture that simply are not found in the text. The result is that we rewrite what the Bible says.

This is not necessarily done with an evil motive. It is nevertheless adding outside information into the Bible.

We must keep in mind the warnings against adding to the scriptures. Revelation 22:18-19 (in the specific context of adding to the words of prophesy of the book of Revelation will result in God adding to him the plagues written therein).

Those who claim that we must look at the culture of Corinth argue that the female head covering requirement no longer applies. The practice was only applicable back then.

Looking at the meaning of the New Testament through the lens of the culture at the time allows us to pick and choose the parts that we like. We can discard nearly any part that we

don't like by just saying, "Well, that was back then! Things are different now!"

Using the culture at the time has no limits. It also has no rules!

Anyone can declare a topic as unimportant because it only applied back in the old days, not today.

For instance, the Bible condemns cohabitation of unmarried people as fornication, i.e., a sin. However, an argument can easily be made that our modern culture approves and accepts unmarried couples living together. The prohibition against fornication can be eliminated because the restraint was due to the culture back then!

Like I said, no rules! Just eliminate any part of the scriptures that doesn't suit what people want to do.

If verses 2-16 are only related to the existing culture in Corinth, what about the verses 17-33 concerning the Lord's Supper?

Are these verses only cultural too?

Who decides? Me or you?

Remarkably, many Christians point to the second half of Chapter 11 regarding the Lord's Supper as one of the weightier concerns (and a tradition to be kept with great scrutiny to the details). Yet, the first half of Chapter 11 is treated as wholly insignificant and actually rather unimportant.

The truth is the first 16 verses of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 concern spiritual matters, *not culture*.

Paul did not take a diversion into matters of culture or the recent fashion trends in first half of Chapter 11 to transition to the dangers associated with improperly taking of the Lord's Supper in the second half of the chapter.

The entire chapter is God breathed or inspired.

The head covering teachings occur immediately before Paul scolds the Corinthians for the abuses committed during the Lord's Supper or communion. It is inescapable to miss that both matters arise in the same chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. To be fair, the chapter breaks were placed there by men, not by the inspired writer. Yet, the close proximity of both is

undeniable.

So we go from saying the stuff in the first half the chapter is meaningless, unimportant, and trivial to the second half of the chapter where Paul's message is to be given ultra high priority.

There's nothing in Chapter 11 saying the first part doesn't really matter much and the second half is mission critical. Yet, that's the way we treat the text.

If the first half of the chapter is cultural, then sound reasoning suggests the instructions for the Lord's Supper were also just cultural practices for Corinth.

Otherwise, the failure to be consistent in our analysis of scriptures leads to doing what we want, not what the Bible teaches.

Do your own word search in the Bible for a word that sounds like our term "culture" to see what you find.

The closest synonym that I can find to "culture" in the Bible is "the world" or "this world."

The world (our culture) is constantly trying to mold us, shape us, and influence us to be like them, instead of like the people God calls us to be.

### Wasn't Paul Only Writing to the Corinthian Church?

Paul was not only writing these instructions to the church at Corinth.

The modern day attempt to dismiss head covering as a practice limited to some cultural issue in Corinth at the time is superficial and ignores the scriptures are given to us for a purpose.

The inspired writer does not preface his comments on head covering as though he was speaking only to those in Corinth. There's no indication that Paul in the middle of the epistle decided to take a detour from the many problems that he was confronting the church to a side issue involving the Corinthian culture.

Let's test this theory that suggests Paul was singling out the brethren in Corinth to see if it's accurate or not.

Paul wrote that he sent Timothy "who will *remind you of my ways* in Christ, *as I teach everywhere in every church.*" (Italics added) 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:17 NKJV

It seems pretty clear that Paul tells the Corinthians that he teaches the same doctrine in every church.

Observe 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:16 where Paul uses “we.”

He says, “we” have no such custom.

The word “we” is certainly inclusive of others. A reasonable inference is that “we” includes the other apostles.

It is also fair to assume that Paul’s teaching on head covering was not contrary to the teaching by the other apostles.

I believe “we” included all the apostles because they were all being guided by the Holy Spirit. The apostles were all inspired by the same Spirit.

While we are looking at verse 16, it is noteworthy that Paul says the “churches of God” making clear this is *not only a Corinthian issue*, but across all the churches. The word “churches” is plural, not singular.

[I know he uses the word “custom” in verse 16 in the NKJV. Don’t worry! We will get to the different word meanings for “traditions” and “customs” a little later.]

### It’s Just About the Fashion or the Culture

If the head covering is only about fashion or culture at that specific historical period, then why does Paul get into the shame of a woman having her head shaved?

A shaved head would just be one more fashion trend.

On TikTok (I am told) is a trend for *young openly rebellious women* to shave their heads. For these factious young ladies, shaving their heads is the new fashion statement.

Some science fiction movies portray bald headed women in a positive light. One or two of the Star Trek series had episodes with shaven females.

I recently watched a home renovation show where the woman was shaved bald (not from cancer treatment) and it was clearly her fashion statement.

This “extreme trend” is not main stream. Women with shaved heads may be fashionable in

some isolated social circles, but not many. Most women naturally want hair on their head because the hair is a glory given the woman by God.

Keep asking yourself, why is Paul discussing fashion in the middle of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11?

Did the Holy Spirit just suddenly move Paul to delve into what the Corinthian women needed to know about the latest fashion trend?

The position that head covering is only a cultural or fashion matter also begs the question of why are the angels involved?

Are angels, heavenly beings, really interested in earthly fashion statements or some minor cultural matter?

It is illogical (and unlike Paul) to shift from a discussion of Godly wisdom (determined to know nothing other than Christ) to abruptly change the topic for 16 verses to the cultural fashion of the day in Corinth and away from the serious issues and problems in the church at Corinth. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2: 2

The argument that Paul is discussing the current fashion trends in Corinth among the other seemingly more serious issues is highly improbable.

### The Minister at Church Said The Head Covering Instructions Were Just For Corinth

Here are some fair questions to ask anyone (including your minister) who says that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 only applied back then to those living in Corinth.

1. Is the headship hierarchy spelled out in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:3 applicable today or only to those in Corinth at the time?
2. Assuming the headship chain of command with Christ as the head of the church still applies today, then why does 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:4-5 only apply to those in Corinth back then?
3. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7 were only the Corinthian men created in the image and glory of God or does this verse apply to all men in every place and age?
4. Were only the women at the church in Corinth the glory of man? Said differently, are women today the glory of man as described in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7?
5. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:10, why are the angels only affected by the women in Corinth at that point in time? What was it about these particular women that troubled the angels that women in the other churches did not pose the same concern?

6. Can you show me any place in Genesis - Revelation that indicates 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 was limited to those in Corinth or limited to that period of time?
7. If the Holy Spirit gives us everything that we need to know, why do we require facts about the culture not found in the Bible?
8. What verses in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians are simply a matter of culture? How did you make this determination?

Write down the verse numbers from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 that do not apply today and only applied to those in Corinth. Next write down the verse numbers from this same passage that still apply to us today.

Using only God's word (Genesis - Revelation) explain how you decide which verses apply today and what ones only applied back then.

I hold fast to the principle that the scriptures are sufficient and nothing more is needed.

Paul wrote to Timothy telling him that:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is scripture, thus it is profitable for doctrine.

Tossing out the head covering instructions as no longer relevant in our modern day seems a touch arrogant and prideful. I don't know about you, but I don't exactly feel qualified to disregard any of verses in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11.

### The Women in Corinth Were Trying to Take Over the Church

Another cultural position is that the women at the church in Corinth were trying to overthrow the authority of the men. The head covering requirement was to make sure the Corinthian women demonstrated their submission to male leadership in the church.

One man who suggests the head covering requirement for the women in Corinth was due to the women refusing male leadership in the church.

He basically writes that in the first century, the failure to wear a covering sent a signal to the congregation that a woman was rejecting the authority of male leadership. In short, he says that Paul was concerned about head coverings only because the message they sent to people

in that culture.

Now *if this is accurate*, then we should be able to turn to scripture where we are told that Paul's concern was the message being sent to the culture. Let's read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 and find where it says what the gentleman suggests.

I don't find it anywhere. Paul did not hint anywhere in his letter that this was a cultural message for a specific place or time.

If the Holy Spirit had inspired this man's conclusion, then I would heartily agree with it. However, we find no such words in the text.

The gentleman's conclusion is purely conjecture. It is nothing more than raw speculation.

Paul offers no such reasoning.

The danger that comes from interpreting the Bible based upon information, data, facts, or unfounded conclusions *should literally create fear* in any Bible student diligently seeking the truth.

Truth is not founded, based, or built upon error, lies, or inaccurate information.

Christians *need to practice what we preach!* If we teach the Bible is all we need for life and Godliness, then we should mean it.

That means we don't explain the Bible *based upon facts about the existing culture* that come from other sources.

If the facts we use for our conclusions are not found in Genesis to Revelation, then we have by our actions just determined the Bible is not sufficient.

Interestingly, the apostle Peter was familiar with all of Paul's letters.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:14-16, the NKJV reads “. . . as also in **all his epistles** . . . .” (Bold added)

In reviewing several other translations the word “all” appears in the various versions.

A reasonable inference is that Peter knew the things that Paul taught and had seen his various letters to the other churches including 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11. Accepting this proposition to be correct, I don't find Peter giving any counter instructions to what Paul has written about head covering.

One could presume based upon Peter's outspoken personality that if Paul's letters contained error that Peter would have said so.

Peter recognized that Paul's epistles contained things difficult to understand:

“ . . . as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:15-16 NKJV

Since Peter does not challenge any of Paul's doctrines, then it seems reasonable that Peter agreed with Paul's instructions for proper head covering.

Nor does Peter state that some of what Paul writes concerns cultural matters for a specific congregation.

### Prostitution (and We Don't Want Women Looking Like Prostitutes!)

Maybe you have run across the “prostitution” position?

The argument is that Greek prostitutes went around with their heads uncovered. Therefore, the Christian women in Corinth were told to wear a covering to avoid looking like prostitutes.

This position is yet one more sliver of the cultural objection used by those who oppose the covering directives to women.

The “prostitution argument” seems to have originated with Adam Clarke (1762 - 1832) who wrote a commentary on the Bible.

Clarke did not document the source for his information that the typical attire for a harlot in Corinth involved some aspect of head covering or being uncovered.

Having personally read Adam Clarke's commentary on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11, I can verify that his commentary does not document the source of his information. He was certainly not alive in ancient Corinth, thus he had no direct personal knowledge.

Christians as a whole have been heavily impacted by the restoration movement - we are members of a body that “speaks where the Bible speaks and silent where the Bible is silent.”

If we apply the principle to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11, the scriptures do not mention



prostitution or prostitutes. There is no suggestion that the head covering instructions for a woman are given to avoid her looking like a harlot.

Ultimately, we must decide whether to speak what Adam Clarke speaks (including those who make the same argument as Clarke) or to *remain silent about any consideration* that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 deals with the dress of *prostitutes*.

As I already mentioned, I hold to the belief that the Bible is sufficient and that no other outside source is necessary to understand what is needed for eternal life and Godliness.

Those who press the prostitution argument attempt to cure the Bible's silence about prostitution by adding to the scriptures to prove Paul was concerned about the appearance of a harlot. Thus, the prostitution excuse reduces the command to nothing more than a cultural matter that no longer applies to us.

The Bible is not silent about the reasons behind the requirement for a woman to cover her head with a scarf or shawl.

Paul lists specific reasons in his explanation for head covering. Personally, I am going to go with Paul's list of reasons since he was inspired by the Holy Spirit who has the mind of God.

We will explore these reasons a little later including the explanation that the basis for proper head covering goes all the way back to creation, i.e., Adam and Eve.

[Rabbit trail - Since Paul goes all the way back to creation, the prostitute position quickly falls apart. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were the only two people alive. With no women other than Eve, there were no prostitutes.]

### Church and Secular History

Interestingly, the majority of the people who subscribe to any of the various cultural views utterly ignore the church history regarding the head covering practices.

I mean it is ironic that these folks argue a historical knowledge of the culture is the necessary lens to interpret the scriptures, then they completely disregard 2,000 years of church history.

The church history that we can read is persuasive in favor of women wearing an artificial covering.

[Not that I believe this history controls, but it is evidence of what those who came long before us believed and practiced.]

Church history demonstrates that women veiled or covered their heads in the assemblies during worship (and private prayer and prophesy outside the assemblies).

For 2,000 years, history shows this was the practice for Christian women in every age, in virtually every denomination, and in every country.

The records recounting church history are seen through the eyes of the early writings that show the covering was viewed as a cloth veil, not a woman's hair.

Paintings, drawings, sketches, and writings document the practice of external covering, i.e., a woman covering her head with a shawl, scarf, or artificial cover.

The change in attitude against wearing a covering can be traced back to the feminist movement in the early 1900s. As the demand for female rights came to the forefront, the notion that a wife should submit to her husband (or even acknowledge the obligation to obey her husband) became a source of disdain, contempt, and ridicule.

Getting rid of the covering was a symbolic gesture proclaiming equality with men.

With female rights came both an unwillingness to accept the rank assigned by God and the refusal to outwardly signify the rank by veiling or covering the head.

This is not to say the feminist movement was the sole cause for the change in a practice that had existed for 2,000 years, but it nonetheless was a crucial factor for the change in attitude.

As one writer pointed out, it is bizarre that for 2,000 years that Christian women wore head coverings in prayer and public worship without there being any scriptural basis for the practice.

Amazingly this recent revelation that "there is no command for a woman to cover her head" has been discovered in the last 100 years.

I also want to take a brief moment to defend women in regard to the feminist movement.

The feminist movement could never have gained any traction without wicked men who jumped on the proverbial band wagon in support. History well documents that most American women opposed feminism. Without evil men who rejected God's design, the

movement would have never achieved the “success” that it has today.

God formed man and woman as equals in worth, but placed man over woman in the hierarchy. Those who oppose God, oppose His ways.

A special word of caution when you hear (or read on the internet) about the culture of Corinth at the time Paul penned the first letter to the Corinthians. There are a lot of misunderstandings, even of the uninspired secular history.

Greek-controlled Corinth was destroyed by the Romans (completely obliterated) approximately 100 years before Paul wrote the letter.

The culture in Corinth 100 years following the Roman occupation was considerably different than before Rome took over.

At the time 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was written, Corinth was a mixed population and in some ways comparable to America’s melting pot. There were Greeks, Romans, Jews, and a number of other ethnic groups living there - each who still retained aspects of their originating cultures.

To boldly say the previous Greek culture dominated is to ignore secular history to the contrary.

On the web are all kinds of comments and ideas about the culture of Corinth that are completely and utterly lacking in any historical evidence. The comments often suggest the Greek culture that existed before Rome conquered or focus on one segment of the population after the rebuilding of Corinth. These types of comments are not historically accurate.

When doing your research, be a little cautious about someone suggesting the details of the culture in Corinth because the culture changed when Rome conquered and destroyed the city.

I have not provided the church history in detail for three reasons.

First, it is not difficult to find.

Second, the church history evidence is only persuasive, not determinative.

Third, the larger the book, the less likely it will be read.

## Paul Delivered “Traditions” for Women to Cover

In verse 2, Paul says that he delivered “traditions.” [NKJV]

Hooray, we found the legal loophole!

The covering instructions for women are merely traditions and not commands. Since this head covering stuff only involves some old traditions, we can ignore them. We only have to keep the actual commands in the Bible.

On the surface, this sounds plausible. But like the other objections opposing the need for a woman to veil or cover, we should probably evaluate the position a little further.

In Greek, the word “traditions” (“paradoseis”) is defined to properly give, (hand over) from close-beside, referring to tradition as being passed on from one generation to the next.

The King James Version translates the Greek word as “ordinances.” A word that sounds a whole lot more like a law to be obeyed or followed.

The word “traditions” has been given a watered down meaning in English.

We tend to think of our own family holiday traditions at Christmas or Thanksgiving. However, caution must be exercised to prevent reducing the “traditions” delivered by an inspired apostle (God breathed commands) to the level of the traditions of men that are not binding.

There is a remarkable distinction between the traditions of men in contrast to apostolic traditions handed down to us. Colosians 2:8 warns us against the traditions of men.

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Colosians 2:8

The *traditions of men* will cheat you with empty deceit whereas the apostolic traditions must be viewed as commands from God.

2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:15 says to stand fast in the traditions (meaning apostolic traditions):

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:15 NKJV

What are these apostolic traditions?

There is no one around today who lived back at that time to tell us!

Where can we find these apostolic traditions?

Good news! The Bible is all we need!

When you study the Bible, then you read about the “traditions” (that are just as applicable today as they were 2,000 years ago).

Let’s take a quick look at another tradition that we can read about in the Bible and that still applies to us.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6 the writer, the apostle Paul, calls for the church to *withdraw from one not keeping the tradition* (context being a man who will not work).

“But we command you, brethren, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and **not according to the tradition which he received from us.**” 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6 NKJV (Italics, Underlining, and Bold added)

Paul commanded withdrawal from anyone who refuses to hold fast to an apostolic tradition. The specific tradition under discussion was the apostolic tradition for a man to work. No freeloaders or lazy bums allowed!

Take note of the language, “we command . . . *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* . . .”

The command to withdraw from the brother who breaks the tradition for a man to work is made in the name of our Lord. (Italics added)

Turning back to our discussion of the apostolic traditions regarding head covering, we need to ask a couple of questions.

Has the modern day practice of women not covering their heads during prayer come from the philosophy of men, i.e., empty deceit?

Has Satan deceived us with assurances that the covering instructions *aren’t what God said*?

In Genesis 3:1 we learn that the serpent deceived Eve into eating of the tree that God had

expressly forbidden.

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 NKJV (Underlining added)

One of the talking points of the serpent to Eve was the assurance that her eyes would be opened and that she would be like God, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:5 This was a direct appeal to pride and the desire to be wise and knowing - *encouraging her to be, you know, one of the cool kids!*

Satan seems to be saying to us, “Has God *really* said these traditions delivered to you by Paul are ordinances to keep and follow”?

The Devil can readily appeal to our pride and ego in the same way that Eve was tempted. The “pride of life” is one of the three ways that we are tempted.

It appears to me that Satan is saying to us, “You’re educated and you know the scriptures! How silly for anyone to believe that wearing (or not wearing) a head covering during prayer matters to God! That’s such an overly technical, legalistic view of the Bible, surely God doesn’t mean that! You’re far too wise to believe such a crazy notion!”

Satan’s long history of deceit seems to emanate from just slightly undermining something God has said and casting doubt that God really meant what He said.

Bottom line - apostolic traditions are the same as commands that we need to obey. These traditions are not the same as our family holiday customs.

The reduction of an apostolic tradition to being something that is merely insignificant poses a real danger in my opinion.

### The Wedding Ring Is a Substitute

Another offshoot of the cultural position is that we can replace the head covering symbol that God selected with another one of our own choosing.

Like the Frank Sinatra song “I Did It My Way” - the wedding ring is substituted for the woman’s veil.

The woman who chooses to replace God’s symbol of the external covering is essentially

saying, “I love you God . . . . but I’m Doin’ It My Way!”

Substituting the wedding ring for the woman’s covering sounds a lot like replacement of the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper with cheese burgers and Coca Cola.

Growing up I heard a preacher talk about a progressive church in California that had substituted these for the bread and wine. I never knew if this church was a real one or whether the preacher was using an imaginary church to make his point that the elements of the Lord’s Supper have been established by Jesus, i.e., we don’t have the authority to change and override Him.

The Corinthians definitely got an earful in the second half of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Chapter 11 for making their own changes to the Lord’s Supper.

Paul rips into them for turning the Lord’s Supper into more or less a party.

“For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:21-22 NKJV

As he continues his rebuke, Paul gives a stern warning:

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 27-29 NKJV

Making changes to the symbols that God has declared seems risky if you ask me.

We see in Leviticus the two sons of Aaron who decided to use a different type of fire than what God commanded by seemingly saying, “Hey, this fire is just as good!”

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” Leviticus 10:1-2 NKJV (Underling added)

Christians have no authority to change the symbols of baptism or communion.

We likewise have no authority from Christ to exchange head covering on women for some other symbol like a wedding ring.

Laughably, those who subscribe to the wedding ring substitution don't require the husband to remove his wedding ring to pray. If the wedding ring is truly the substitute, then men need to remove their wedding band before praying or prophesying. Otherwise, the symbolic meaning is lost.

The Bible speaks concerning a woman putting a cover on her head. The Bible never mentions wedding rings.

### Noah and the Flood . . . "Huh"?

I almost elected not to talk about the "we can't all be wrong" argument.

The excuse is that none of the women in my church wear an external covering, nor do the women in churches all across the country. Thus, the argument becomes we can't all be wrong!

I decided to discuss this objection because there may be someone (who deep in the back of their mind) unconsciously uses this excuse as a source of comfort for not covering.

The argument that "we can't all be wrong" gives a false sense of confidence.

In the days of Noah, God destroyed every living creature except for those on the ark. Every man, woman, and child drowned in the water - only the eight souls in Noah's clan survived. Genesis Chapters 6 and 7

God destroyed the world because man was so evil! Genesis 6:5-8

How did man get to this point of depravity?

Simple actually: man stopped honoring God.

The first baby step away from obeying God begins with not respecting Him. Not honoring Him!

Without honor no one listens. Without honor, no one hears.



When no one hears, no one cares.

The slope just gets steeper and more slippery from there. At full tilt going downhill, you reach maximum depravity.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:5 we are told that Noah was a “preacher of righteousness.” I take this to mean that Noah was preaching to those who were perishing, trying to convince them to repent before the flood.

I suspect some of the folks who died in the flood said, “Hey, Noah! Chill dude! We can’t all be wrong!”

I admit this is conjecture on my part (I have no scripture to back me up that the “we can’t all be wrong” argument was made to Noah).

However, I have scripture to prove the position that “we can’t all be wrong” is bogus!

The narrative recorded in Genesis Chapters 6 and 7 destroys the position that “we can’t all be wrong!” The whole world was destroyed, save eight souls.

The excuse that no one at my church covers and none of my friends in other churches cover sounds highly persuasive to us. The majority rules! There’s safety in numbers!

Yet, the flood wiped out all the naysayers in the day of Noah. God’s way outweighed the group consensus in the days of Noah. God’s way outweighs the group consensus today too.

Jesus said many will take the path that leads to destruction. Few will find the path that leads to life.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV

My mama used to ask me, “If everyone else jumps off a tall building, are you going to jump with them”? Her point was that just because other people do something, doesn’t make it right!

I bet your mama used to say the same thing!

While we're talking about our mothers! A similar excuse is that, "Mama was a faithful Christian! She never wore a head covering!"

This is purely an emotional tug of the heart-strings and an excuse *based upon absolutely nothing!* This argument is weaker than that "light roast stuff" some places sell for coffee!

Seriously, my mama (and your mama) were sinners! They made a lot of mistakes! Just because mama did something does not prove there is a scriptural basis. We'll all be judged by God's word, not Mama's.

God loves us! He demands our obedience! I don't pretend to hold the capacity to understand all His ways; but I can readily appreciate that head covering is a symbol of honor owed to Him! That's the reason I remove my hat to pray or take off my cap for worship, Bible class, and prayer.

If we stop having honor for God, then we are going to get further and further away from Him. We will start to do our own will and what seems right in our own eyes.

The symbol of head covering (a man removing his cap or hat) is a continual reminder that we must honor God! The equivalent symbol for a woman is placing a covering over her head.

I can see how the God who loves us so very much would put in place a symbol to regularly remind us that honor is due to Him in prayer and worship.

A symbol that helps to keep us from that first baby step towards disobedience and eternal death.

One last thought before we move to the next objection.

The Bible teaches that all men sin and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

How does "we can't all be wrong stack up against that . . . think on it for a bit!

In a culture that can't tell the difference between boys and girls, is it possible that we may not have an unbiased view of God's word?

### The Dialogue Theory or Explanation

This particular objection to a woman having any need to wear an external covering on her

head during prayer or prophesy is based upon a purported dialogue or conversation taking place.

The idea is that the letters from Corinth to Paul and his letters to them constitute a conversation.

This construction of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 is a new concept that is promoted in large part by a female minister and theologian in England.

This explanation fails in several regards as I will illustrate.

The premise is that Paul and the Corinthians are engaged in what we would describe as a conversation by correspondence.

The *alleged* discussion is taking place with letters being exchanged between Paul and the Corinthians, much like a modern day text conversation (but with longer delays in the responses).

It is clear from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:9 that Paul had previously written to the Corinthians. However, the earlier epistle does not exist any longer. The fact remains there was at least one other letter from the apostle to the church at Corinth that we don't have.

From 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:1, we learn that the Corinthians had written to Paul seemingly to ask some questions. Thus, it is also accurate that the church at Corinth had sent at least one letter to Paul with concerns or questions for him to answer.

Thus far, the dialogue theory is supported by the Bible. But the explanation becomes tenuous from this point forward as it indulges in considerable speculation and makes many assumptions.

At this point, the proponents say that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11:1-16 is a mixture of quotations from the letter the Corinthians wrote to Paul followed by his response to their statements.

In business e-mails, I have seen people quote something from an e-mail sent to them in their reply. Sometimes the color is changed to red to show this came from the email they received. Then in a different color the answer is given. If you have seen or used a similar practice, then maybe this will help explain the dialogue theory.

The proponents of the dialogue argument sometimes make use of subheadings to show who

was doing the talking. Here's an example for you.

### **Paul speaking**

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

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Corinthians Speaking**

(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.

### **Paul Speaking**

(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.

### **Corinthians Speaking**

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

### **Paul Speaking**

(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. (13) Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? (14) Does not . . . [Yes, the text is broken at this juncture to support the theory.]

### **Corinthians Speaking**

. . . even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

## Paul Speaking

(15) But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. (16) But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

To be clear, the subheadings are used to demonstrate their explanation that Paul is answering specific things the Corinthians supposedly wrote to him.

The letter the Corinthian church wrote to Paul no longer exists.

Thus, no one can say with any degree of certainty what the letter said. Therefore, the nature and content of the letter is nothing more than guess work at best.

As support that Paul was responding to the Corinthians' letter, the proponents point to other places in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians where Paul quotes things that were said. However, this still does not establish the contents of the missing letter, nor does it preclude that Paul quoted from verbal reports or other sources.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:12 Paul leads with quotations "Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul. . ." and "For when one says, "I am of Paul. . ."

He continues his discourse about being of Paul or Apollos in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:4.

Did these quotes come from the letter the church at Corinth penned to Paul?

Again, no one can say for certain. These statements could just as easily have been reported to Paul verbally by Timothy, Chloe's people (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:11), or some other person who had more recently visited Corinth.

Reading on down into 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-34, these verses do not appear to be Paul replying to a letter from the Corinthians.

In fact, Paul says, "I hear . . ." This sounds like a verbal report about the abuses during the Lord's Supper that Paul possibly heard from a faithful brother who had visited Corinth.

I am hard pressed to believe the Corinthians wrote to Paul saying, "The Lord's Supper has been modified just a bit since you left. It's a genuine celebration with some really getting

drunk! It's great! So our question is . . . .”?

I find it is pretty obvious Paul is not replying to a letter from the Corinthians as he begins in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17 regarding his criticism of their partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Paul is known to have sent others on his behalf to check on churches where Paul had preached to see how the brethren were doing. For example, see 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-8:

“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-8 NKJV (Underlining added)

Likewise, we also know that Paul sent Timothy to Corinth.

“Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:16-17 NKJV (Underling added)

Timothy was also likely returning to Corinth for a short stay. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:10-11

Aside from the possibility of verbal reports from those who had visited Corinth, the Holy Spirit was certainly capable of revealing to Paul in any number of ways the problems and issues that the Corinthian church was dealing with.

The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was inspired.

We should not rule out the possibility that the Spirit let Paul know about the conditions and issues in Corinth.

In attempting to support that Paul was quoting from the letter sent by the church at Corinth, the dialogue theory proponents also point to another quote Paul appears to make.

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:12 NKJV

Once again, any letter the Corinthians wrote to Paul no longer exists.

The notion that anyone can articulate what was contained in a writing that is no longer available is more than a mere stretch. It is guess work, rank speculation, and complete conjecture.

Even by accepting the unsupported proposition that Paul is responding to something the church wrote to him about head covering directives, it is impossible to know what they said in their letter since we don't have it.

I see other statements from Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians responding to things that the brethren appear to be saying about Paul. These statements do not appear to be from correspondence written to Paul, but from gossip or murmuring about him.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:10 Paul writes, “For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”

Clearly this is a statement made by the Corinthians and Paul is quoting them.

Assuming this statement was written in a letter to Paul, then the Corinthians would have written, “Paul your letters are weighty and powerful, but your bodily presence is weak! Your speech is contemptible!”

I don't know about you, but I don't see someone writing this statement in a letter. It sounds a lot more like what someone would say when Paul wasn't in the room. The statement sounds a lot more like a verbal attack upon Paul when he was not there.

I am also personally wary of theories or explanations that appear to have a separate agenda associated with them.

Seemingly those who have adopted the dialogue explanation for why a woman does not need to cover her head also support women pulpit ministers, women elders and deacons, and female leadership roles in the church.

This dialogue theory of interpreting 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is an unreasonable conclusion in my opinion.

### Burden of Proof

The burden of proof rests with the person who claims there is no longer a reason to comply with the head covering ordinances.

What do I mean by this?

Simple actually. The directives for the appropriate head covering for men and women are found in the text. The language comes directly from the Holy Spirit.

The analysis of whether a Christian must comply with head covering *begins with the recognition that these commands have been issued.*

Therefore, the instructions for head covering should be followed or obeyed *absent someone providing a sound reason not to keep the commands.*

In short, the burden of proof rests with those who suggest that the head covering traditions no longer apply to us.

If we are going to ignore anything written in the Bible, then we should have a good reason for our actions.

Without a sound basis for not keeping the commands, then we have chosen to do what is right in our own eyes.

### The Woman's Hair was Believed to be Her Testicles

No, I haven't added a steamy, spicy section to keep you reading. Unfortunately, this ludicrous position is actually taken by some.

Once again, those that subscribe to this objection seem to look to culture at the time 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was written. The culture relied upon comes from sources outside the Bible.

Did some of the Corinthians hold the belief that the woman's hair was connected to her fertility? I don't know and really don't care.

The Bible is absolutely silent about this suggested belief. However, the Bible is not silent



regarding the reasons for the requirement for the woman to veil herself when praying or prophesying.

Enough said.

### Head Covering is Foolishness!

Now it is entirely possible that someone may also want to argue that these head covering ideas are nonsense and complete foolishness!

Sorry to break the bad news, but as Christians we are called to be fools!

Just a few chapters earlier in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul has told the brethren *that he came to them not with wisdom* or excellent speech, but declaring the testimony of God.

He had already said, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:2

His speech was not with persuasive human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power - that their faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but the power of God. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:4-5

Paul continues that he speaks the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God - not the wisdom of this age. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:6-7

He wraps up the end of Chapter 2 stating:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:12-16 NKJV (Underline added)

The subject of wisdom continues in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:18-20:

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let

him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” Therefore let no one boast in men.”

Paul suggests rather pointedly that Christians should be careful to avoid the wisdom of men including the empty deceit that comes from the carnal man.

Spiritual truths cannot be understood by the wise of this age.

Paul is saying that the things that he has given to us come by way of the Holy Spirit, thus they are God breathed or inspired. This includes the apostolic traditions for appropriate headaddress that Paul delivered.

Remember Paul states the natural man does not receive the spiritual teachings because they are foolishness to him. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14 Nor can the natural man know the spiritual things because they are spiritually discerned. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14

We know the wisdom of many, many people in our modern day is that the proper head covering instructions just “plain don’t matter.”

Men call these head covering commands sheer nonsense, silly, even funny to the point of laughter.

I wonder if Paul foresaw that the wise and prudent of our day would find his writings so amusing and entertaining?

Sadly, some of those professing Christ disregard, discount, and also look for ways to distance themselves from the Bible’s teachings involving head covering, gender roles, and God’s authority.

Given the choice between appearing as a fool to the rest of the world (or dishonor to Christ, who died a cruel, savage death upon the cross for me) just label me a fool.

### The Significance of the Image of God Must Not Be Overlooked

One of the reasons that Paul gives for the head covering traditions is that mankind is made in the image of God. Man in particular is the glory of God. These are not cultural, but encompass every generation.

God is not required to provide us with any reason for His commands. He is the Creator and the creation should obey because He is God!

Nonetheless, Paul gives several reasons so that we can understand the basis for these ordinances. We should pay attention to the arguments Paul gives.

Depending upon how you want to classify or count Paul's reasons for the head covering commands, there are 5 or 6 explanations provided for why these commands exist.

We should not ignore, brush-off, or gloss by his teaching *about why these practices are expected*.

We previously considered the moral obligation or the debt that we owe to honor God and Christ. But, that's not the only explanation that Paul gives to us.

He also connects the requirement for a man to be uncovered to bearing the glory of God:

“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.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7-9 NKJV (Bolding added)

Paul says that men are the “image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.”

Those who hold a feminist view of society accuse Paul of being sexist, chauvinistic, and a hater of women. These critics willfully forget that these commands are not from Paul, but from God through the Holy Spirit, who inspired these things to be written down.

Paul relates the head covering all the way back to creation with the assigned gender roles that God ordained. The link back to creation applies to both sexes, not just women.

Both men and women are made in God's image, *but only man is the glory of God*.

Woman is the glory of man verses 9-10:

“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*.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7-11 NKJV (Underlining, bolding, and italics added)

Woman being the glory of man means women of every age and time, not just the Corinthian women. The principle that woman is the glory of man remains as true today as it did 2,000 years ago.

The human female is the called fairer sex in many types of literature. A woman is built with a beauty that a man is not.

Taking mankind as a whole, the woman is hands down more beautiful than her male counterpart. In creating woman, God displays mankind (human beings) in their most esthetically pleasing and exquisite form. She was made in the image of God, just like the man, but she is the fairer of the two sexes. Woman is the glory of man.

Paul explains that the man being the glory of God should not cover his head.

The woman being the glory of man should cover her head. The gloriousness of human kind, specifically the beauty and glory of woman, must be covered to give honor to God that He may be glorified.

### Theological Significance Throughout the Bible

The head covering commands carry theological significance that is precarious to overlook and ignore.

“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.”  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7-10 NKJV (Underlining added)

Paul takes the symbols of proper head attire all the way back to the creation of mankind. He spells out that woman was created for man, not the other way around.

Consider verses 7-10 quoted above with an eye towards the bigger picture that we see from Genesis.

Genesis 2:15-22 “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man."

From the foregoing in Genesis, we learn that:

- man was created first, before woman.
- man was created from the dirt.
- woman was taken from Adam's rib.
- Adam was told not to eat of the tree before Eve was even on the scene.
- Adam named the animals, not Eve.
- God named Adam; Adam named Eve.
- Eve was made to be a help meet for Adam.

Paul says the root of the head covering commands goes all the way back to Adam and Eve and the creation account. This strongly indicates that head covering is serious, not just a cultural phenomena in Corinth.

Scripture that carries a significant theological emphasis requires greater weight to be given to the importance of the passage. That's my opinion, you will have to make up your own mind.

Throughout the scriptures, God uses types in the physical realm to depict the spiritual realm.

Types are a common means used in the Bible to show us the heavenly domain with earthly types because we can not see the spiritual world. It is hidden from us. Therefore, the Bible uses things in our physical world that we are able to see and understand to illustrate the spiritual world to us.

The creation account including the order or sequence are spelled out in the Bible for a reason. These show us: (1) God's plan, (2) His design, and (3) His purposes (to the limited extent that He reveals these things to us).

The theological significance closely connected to the head covering instructions should not be shrugged off. The culture may not like God's thoughts on the roles and ranks of men and women, but Christians in God's army had better not disregard God's directives.

Those who discount the theology behind the head covering *give excuses that fall short of sound logic and a fair-minded approach* to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11.

### It's Just Not Fair!

We will momentarily digress to the fundamental fairness of requiring a woman to cover her head.

Some women want to cry that it is unfair to require a head covering for a woman and not for a man.

Let's briefly consider whether God is being unfair.

God gives each sex separate strengths, abilities, and special privileges that the opposite sex does not receive.

Women have attributes that men do not.

We already established that women are the more beautiful sex. Is this fair to men?

Let's be clear, appearance has value in our physical world. Why should a man be less attractive?

It's not fair that a beautiful woman with her female charm gets all sorts of advantages in life that a guy doesn't receive. Why?

Because God, the Creator, who made all things, made the decision.

Women are prettier, that is just the way it is.

In my younger years, I would always hear about women pulled over for excessive speeding who were given a warning, not a ticket! Not that I should have been breaking the law with speeding, but this never seemed quite fair to me. An attractive woman could charm her way out of a traffic fine that a man would have to pay.

God gives each of us special gifts and qualities. The clay should not question the Potter

about the special gifts and talents that we are given. This applies in the narrow sense of the individual abilities that we receive such as physical strength, intellect, etc. as well as the broader view of the gender that God assigns to us.

We should receive what God has given to each sex with gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation.

Likewise, any accompanying responsibility associated with God's gifts is reasonable, fair, and suitable. God knows what He is doing!

Women and men are given different responsibilities in their respective roles. It's more than fair (and far more than what we rightfully deserve)!

### Hey, Doesn't the Bible Say the Hair is the Covering? What's Up With This?

The knowledge that the woman's hair is a covering isn't exactly shocking or surprising to us.

A typical 3-year old knows their hair covers their head, just ask them. "Hey, what's on your head"?

So when we get to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:15 to read the woman's hair is given to her for a covering, there is really no disputing it!

Hair serves as a natural covering for both men and women.

Take a moment and read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 so it is fresh in your mind.

The discussion in verses 4-6 *is limited to times of prayer or prophesying.*

If this were not the case, then whatever is being required of a man or a woman would be mandated at all times, not just prayer or prophesying.

This leads to the reasonable inference that any covering on the physical head of a man in verse 4 can be removed by the man before he enters into prayer or prophesying. The rest of the time the man is free to cover his head.

Likewise, in verse 5, a woman who is not covered can cure, fix, resolve, or correct the lack of a covering by taking some type of action before she enters into prayer or prophesying.

I'm no rocket scientist and not the brightest bulb in the room. But even I can see that if the woman's hair is the covering reflected in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5-6, then hair is also the covering for men in verse 4.

Whether cloth or hair, the covering in verses 4-6 *applies to both men and women*.

Some people seem to lose sight of this concept that if hair is truly the covering for the woman, then hair is the covering for the man that must be removed before he prays or prophesies.

If hair is the covering under discussion in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16, then a man must shave his head to pray or prophesy. The text clearly instructs that a man is to be uncovered and a woman to be covered.

We talk out of both sides of our mouth if we say that natural hair is the covering for the woman in verses 5-6 while simultaneously saying the hair on the man is not the covering in verse 4.

If covering in verses 4-6 is the hair, then men need to shave their heads to remove the covering before prayer or prophesying (absent genetic baldness).

Consistency demands that the hair *either is the covering or (is not the covering)* at issue in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:4-6. It is dishonest (I know this is a strong word) to say the hair is the covering for a woman, but not for a man. The two verses are right next to each other.

At the end of the day if the woman's hair is the covering, then why are we having the discussion at all?

We should be focusing on the requirement for a man to shave his head in order to remove the covering before praying or prophesying.

No reputable Bible student or scholar to my knowledge takes the position that a man must shave his head to comply with Paul's commands.

Our objective must therefore be to determine whether the woman's hair literally serves as the covering identified in verse 5 (the position taken by many brethren).

Earlier I explained that appropriate head covering is a moral obligation, a duty, a debt owed to God so to speak.



Generally speaking, hair grows on the head of all women including atheist women.

It would seem odd that a Christian woman satisfies her moral obligation by naturally having hair on her head when an atheist woman has hair also.

The more logical analysis is that the woman must fulfill her duty *by taking some action*, i.e., covering her head.

Paul goes all the way back to creation and brings angels into view. Head covering is about something much more significant than natural hair. We'll get more into these thoughts a little later.

The context of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 demonstrates there is far more to the issue than a woman having natural hair on her head unless you believe that Paul was simply babbling or jabbering regarding some nonessential point for half a chapter.

The letter is written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We should take great care not to dismiss these verses as inconsequential and put forth a genuine effort to understand what is being said.

Anything the Holy Spirit says is important!

#### Consider the Greek Words that Paul Used

If Paul was talking about hair as being the covering in verses 4-5, then he could have used the Greek words “koma” or “kome” for hair.

Paul knows these Greek words because he uses them later on.

In verses 14 and 15, Paul uses two variations of the Greek word “koma” that is defined:

Strong's Concordance 2863 [e]

komaó: to wear long hair

Original Word:

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: komaó

Phonetic Spelling: (kom-ah'-o)

Definition: to wear long hair

Usage: I wear the hair long, allow the hair to grow out.

The second Greek word is the feminine version “kome” that is defined:

Strong's Concordance 2864 [e]  
komé: hair  
Original Word:  
Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine  
Transliteration: komé  
Phonetic Spelling: (kom'-ay)  
Definition: hair  
Usage: hair, long hair.

Now let's go back up to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5 and read what Paul says:

“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.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5 NKJV

Since Paul did not use the Greek words for hair until later, then this serves as a good indication that verse 5 is not talking about “hair” and therefore suggests an external cover is under discussion.

If Paul had meant “hair” in verse 5, then he would have used “kome” or the feminine term for hair. Since he didn't, then we need to pay attention. These words were selected for a reason. These are the divine instructions through the Holy Spirit.

We also can see that the word “shaved” in English means something different than “uncovered” in verse 5.

The context of verse 5 implies that the woman already has naturally occurring hair and there is some action necessary before she enters into prayer or prophesying.

There is nothing in the text to cause us to believe these sisters in Corinth were all bald or shaved. If the sisters already had hair, then the covering must have been some artificial covering that is being discussed.

It is nonsensical to suggest “uncovered” and “shaved” are one and the same in verse 5.

Verse 5 says if the woman is uncovered, then this is the same as if her head were shaved. It is clear in verse 5 that a woman being “uncovered” is not the absence of hair.

Indisputably, Paul that is praising the women for wearing an external, artificial covering on their heads as one of the traditions that he gave to them. See verse 1, “keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”

Paul did not deliver an instruction for the women to grow hair. He is talking about a moral duty to take action.

[I know he uses the word “traditions.” Remember this word in Greek isn’t about the tradition of men, but the apostolic traditions that are commands. Look back to the section titled: Paul Delivered “Traditions for Women to Cover.]

### A Woman Praying Uncovered Should Have Her Head 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.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:6 NKJV

Read it, if the woman is not covered, then she should be shaved.

Assuming for the sake of argument that uncovered actually means “bald”, then what would be the point in shaving the woman’s head.

If the woman is already bald or doesn’t have hair [not covered], then shaving her won’t make a bit of difference. She is already bald.

God does not require anything from us that is outside our control.

A woman may not have hair due to an illness outside of her control or even genetics. In order to comply, a woman would need to find some way to grow hair to fulfill her moral obligation to be covered in prayer or prophesy.

However, any woman (with or without hair) can put a scarf or some type of covering over her head before she enters into prayer.

I often test my own conclusions as a safety check on my thoughts and understanding.

Just to be sure that I am correct, let’s substitute the words in verse 6 to reflect the woman’s hair is the “covering” to see how the verse reads by switching the words around.

v. 6 [modified] For if a woman [has no hair], let her be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her [have hair].

It is wacky to suggest that the woman with no hair needs to be shaved or shorn.

Obviously this cannot be the intent.

In Greek “covered” and “uncovered” have the same root meaning in verses 4-6.

It is clear that the man is do one thing, while the woman is expected to do the exact opposite.

If the duty requires that a man uncover his head, then the corresponding duty requires just the opposite, i.e., the woman is to cover her head with an external covering.

If uncovered is not about a man being expected to shave his head before praying or prophesying, then the root word likewise is not a reference to a woman being given hair for the covering.

Yeah, But The Bible Says the Hair is The Covering!

The Bible does say the woman’s hair is given to her for a covering.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:13-15 NKJV reads:

“Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 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.” (Underling added).

Ah ha! There it is!

Hair is given to the woman for a covering!

Okay, you got me! The Bible says the woman’s hair is given to her as “a” covering. But before I concede the hair is the covering, how about we explore this position just a little more.

Yes, the words in verse 15 do say the hair is a covering for the woman, *but is it the same covering in verses 4-5?*

Don’t rule out the possibility that there is more than one covering under discussion.

A woman with a blouse or shirt has a covering.

When she pulls on a jacket in the winter months, she has a second covering. Both articles of clothing are coverings, but for completely different purposes.

The blouse covers her for modesty whether Spring, Summer, Fall or Winter.

The jacket covers her for warmth in the colder seasons.

In verses 13-15 Paul is making an analogy. He is saying *compare this to that*.

Compare what we know from the physical world to the spiritual realm. If a woman is ashamed to go into public without natural hair, then how much more should she be ashamed to enter into the presence of God in prayer or prophesy without an external covering over her head.

In the physical world or nature, the woman has a covering, i.e., her hair. However, in the spiritual world she needs a different covering to be pleasing to God.

Paul is not literally stating the woman's hair is the covering identified in verses 5-6.

Stay with me and I will explain.

### Rhetorical Questions Are a Literary Device Used to Persuade

A rhetorical question is used to persuade the audience (or cause the listener to think).

In our day, "How could you be so stupid?" is not a question asking someone to give an explanation for their lack of brain power. The question is a tool to bring the listener to the conclusion, i.e., there was poor judgment involved in what they did.

"Judge among yourselves" is followed by a series of rhetorical questions. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:13

Paul is not asking the questions in verses 13 and 14 because he is trying to get answers to his questions.

Instead, Paul asks the questions to direct the listener to the answer that he wants them to reach on their own.

Having lived in Corinth for 1.5 years, Paul well-knows the answer that he expects them to provide. He's the one who taught them! See Acts 18:11 establishing the time Paul spent in Corinth.

Paul expects anyone in Corinth reading his questions in verses 13-14 to already know the answer to each specific question. The questions are a manner of speech or a persuasive argument.

Reread the context of verse 15. The context of verse 15 is not in the spiritual realm, but here on earth in the flesh. Paul says the natural hair given to a woman in nature is for her glory. This glory is here and now on the earth.

If a woman has long hair, it is a glory for her - [ glory for whom ] - [glory for the woman].

The long hair on the woman *is a gift from God for her personal glory.*

The Greek word for glory is "doxa" is defined:

Strong's Concordance 1391e

doxa: opinion (always good in N.T.), hence praise, honor, glory

Original Word:

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: doxa

Phonetic Spelling: (dox'-ah)

Definition: opinion (always good in NT), praise, honor, glory

Usage: honor, renown; glory, an especially divine quality, the unspoken manifestation of God, splendor.

HELPS Word-studies

1391 dóksa (from dokeo, "exercising personal opinion which determines value") – glory. 1391 /dóksa ("glory") corresponds to the OT word, kabo (OT 3519, "to be heavy"). Both terms convey God's infinite, intrinsic worth (substance, essence).

[1391 (dóksa) literally means "what evokes good opinion, i.e. that something has inherent, intrinsic worth" (J. Thayer).]

I mean think about for a minute.

Is Paul asking the Corinthians to tell him that a woman's hair is a covering?

The same question that a 3-year old can happily provide the answer.

Of course not, that would be ridiculous!

So, what is Paul trying to communicate?

Look at Paul's first rhetorical question: "is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered"? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:13

The answer is obviously "No, it is not proper."

If the answer is "Yes, it is proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered, then there would be no reason to ask the question.

For that matter, there would be no need for Paul to have written anything about a covering on the woman's head.

The next question Paul asks: "does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him"? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:14

This second question is not asked because Paul is looking for an answer, but to get the reader to think. The question uses another literary device that we call an analogy.

### An Analogy Is Much Like a Parable

Using an analogy is closely akin to a parable.

A parable is used in making a point *that is not meant literally*.

Jesus routinely taught Godly principles using earthly concepts and parables to teach people.

When Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Mark 4:9 He was talking about people who were willing to accept whatever He had to say.

Jesus was not referring to people who had ears physically attached to the side of their heads.

In Luke Chapter 14, Jesus told the crowd they could not be His disciples unless they first hated their families (fathers, mothers, children, etc.). Luke 14:26

Jesus continued that if the disciples did not bear their own cross, then they could not be His disciples. Luke 14:27

Were these sayings difficult for the 1st century folks to understand?

You bet!

The teachings were so challenging to grasp that many turned away from following Jesus when He said they had to eat His body and drink His blood! John 6:53-58

What happened to those who stopped following Jesus?

The implication seems pretty clear. No one comes to the Father except through Christ. John 14:6

Should the 1<sup>st</sup> century folks have continued to follow Jesus in humility and constant prayer for wisdom to understand the sayings?

That's my opinion. Just because the words spoken by Jesus were challenging to comprehend, did not excuse the people who chose to stop following Him.

Similarly, just because some other aspect of the New Testament may prove difficult for us to grasp does not give us a "free pass" to disregard or ignore it.

Is the "covering" question harder to understand than eat My body and drink My blood?

Maybe or maybe not - the concern should be, are we sincerely with honest hearts working to do whatever is asked of us.

Let's go back to the analogy in verses 13-15.

Paul is comparing the spiritual realm to our earthly existence to make his point.

He is saying *compare* the tradition that I gave you for the woman to be covered in the spiritual activity of prayer or prophesy.

Compare it to what?

To the covering given to the woman in nature, i.e., our physical world.



Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 15. The NKJV says the woman's hair is for "a" covering, not "the covering."

The woman needs her hair in the physical world for her glory, i.e., to feel attractive. She feels shame without hair.

In nature or the physical world, a woman's hair covers her otherwise bald scalp to give her a glory here on earth. The woman would not have this beauty without the hair covering the skin of her head. She would suffer personal dishonor from the lack of hair.

The hair being a woman's glory remains a natural focal point even today. Show nearly any man a video or photograph of a woman with long and flowing hair and generally speaking the man will tell you that the hair captures his attention. He finds the woman's hair beautiful and attractive.

Don't believe me - take a look at the wig industry.

A woman with cancer undergoing chemo treatment that results in losing her hair typically feels embarrassed not to have hair. The shame and concern over her appearance seems to be hardwired or embedded in most females.

To avoid a woman feeling shame, nature has given her long hair for her glory. God is the One who ordered nature and arrayed the woman with hair to make her beautiful, i.e., her glory.

The woman's hair in nature is given to the woman for her own [beauty] glory - the hair like all other attributes is a gift from God.

Thus, two different coverings are being compared one to the other.

The hair is a covering in the physical realm. God gives the hair for a woman's glory while here on the earth.

In the spiritual world, she needs a second covering. The external covering is a second and distinct covering for a different purpose than her hair.

The external covering needed for the spiritual world is not to make the woman more attractive. The external covering is necessary to show that the woman recognizes her rank in God's assigned chain of command.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5-6 says this is about being in the presence of God in the spiritual realm.

When we pray (or prophesy), we conduct an activity in a world that we cannot see or hear what is happening. Sure, we may hear the words in our ears in a public prayer, but the communication is directed to God who sits on a throne in heaven.

The spiritual is quite different than our earthly existence. We are to live in the world, not be of the world. John 17:6-19 The kingdom outside of this earth is a spiritual kingdom.

Paul is telling us to consider the natural world as a type of the spiritual one.

He has already told us in verse 5-6 that a woman entering the spiritual kingdom in prayer and prophesy without an artificial covering on her head shows dishonor. He says that she should feel the same shame as having her head shaved.

### A Gift and a Debt Are Quite Different

The distinction between a gift and owing a debt is not hard for us to understand. A gift at Christmas isn't the same thing as the credit card bill that comes in January!

So we shouldn't mix up the debt owed to God with the gift given to the woman as we read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16.

The debt (moral obligation) that we owe is compliance with God's head covering commands when in prayer or prophesying.

The gift to the woman is her hair gifted by God for her glory. We must not confuse the debt obligation that she owes with the appropriate head covering when she enters into the spiritual activities of prayer or prophesying.

This Christmas tell your wife and kids that the gift will arrive in the envelope from the credit card company (and those wrapped packages have to be returned to the store).

Trying to substitute the debt with the gift doesn't work at Christmas (and it doesn't work with God either).

God expects us to pay our debt (and fulfill our moral obligation).

## Treating the Hair as The Covering Results in a Contradiction in the Scripture

If we choose to read verses 13-15 to say the hair is the covering discussed in verses 4-5, a conflict is created. I showed earlier that the hair is not the woman's covering under consideration in verses 4-5.

If the hair is *literally the woman's covering*, then once again we are in the vicious cycle of needing to shave the woman who already doesn't have hair.

On the other hand, reading verses 13-15 as a different covering than the one discussed in verses 4-5 allows for all 16 verses to be read with harmony. The scarf or veil is the covering for one purpose and the hair is a different kind of covering for another purpose.

Thus, no conflict between verses 4 -5 with verses 13-15.

## Paul Compares Two Different Greek Words for the Coverings

In verses 13 and 14, as Paul sets up his closing arguments for the woman to wear a veil with the Greek word (akatakalypton).

This is the root word "kata" in verses 4-5.

At the very end of Paul's analogy, he uses a completely different word that is often translated as "covering." The Greek word is "peribalaion" which has the meaning "to wrap around, a wrapper, to throw around, a mantle." 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:15

Paul uses the root word "kata" several times, but he only uses "peribalaion" one time.

Why?

It stands to reason that it was not Paul's intention to replace the artificial covering referenced in the earlier verses with natural hair.

I might ask you to get the things out of my truck. If you do not realize that I drive an SUV, then you may be searching the parking lot for a pick up truck. Both are trucks in our common vernacular, but both are distinct types of vehicles.

He is saying that by nature, the adorning of a woman's hair has become her mantle. This mantle is a covering, but one for the purpose of giving glory to the woman.

This mantle is her glory and this glory is what ought to be covered.

To say that the woman's hair is the mantle that equates to the veil or covering in the earlier verses ignores that Paul used a different Greek word.

If Paul had intended for the woman's hair to be the covering addressed in the earlier verses, then he would not have changed to "peribolaïou" from the root word "kata."

In fact, in verse 13 Paul just used the word "akatakaluptos" for "uncovered."

Strong's Concordance (the definition section) defines the Greek word to mean "unveiled" or "uncovered."

Therefore in making the change from the root word "kata" *that he had just used*, the logical conclusion is that Paul has two different types of covering under discussion.

One covering is a cloth or artificial covering while the second is the wrap of the woman's head with hair given in nature for her beauty or glory.

If the hair is truly the covering under discussion by Paul, then he could have easily cleared up the confusion by telling us that it is improper for a woman to pray or prophesy without hair. He could have used the word "kome" or a woman's hair.

The context is found in Paul's rhetorical question, "Judge among yourselves, is it proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered?"

Paul did not say, "Judge for yourselves, is it proper for a woman to pray with *a bald or shaved head*?"

The Corinthians understood the two different Greek words were not the same. Just like we understand that an SUV and a pick up are both trucks. The Corinthians understood Paul was comparing two completely distinct coverings to each other.

### The Woman Covering Her Head Shows Reverence

A woman in prayer with her head artificially covered demonstrates her willingness to humble herself before God acknowledging (to God) and man that her appointed rank is below man.

Covering her glory with a cloth or fabric makes clear to everyone (including the angels)

that she is giving recognition and honor to the rank that God has assigned her. She demonstrates her willingness to cover the glory given to her, i.e., her hair in respect for God.

The woman covers her glory so that God may be glorified.

Christ did not consider it robbery to be called equal to God, but He humbled Himself in obedience until death to please God. Philippians 2:6-8 In a similar fashion, the woman humbles herself in obedience to God's command to cover her hair.

The woman is equal to the man in her intrinsic value to God.

She can declare herself equal to her husband before God without considering it robbery to her husband (or taking anything from her husband that properly belongs to him). She, like her husband, is an heir of Christ and receives the same benefits from Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Like Christ, she shows complete humility by obediently accepting that God is in control and sovereign. God has declared the woman must cover her head when praying and the woman accepts God's decree in obedience. Thus, she openly acknowledges the station in life or rank that He has assigned to her.

Where would we all be, if Christ being equal to God, had refused to: (1) lower Himself by coming to this earth and (2) humble Himself to the point of death?

God paints a picture for us of the relationship of Christ with the church in Ephesians Chapter 5. The picture using another analogy shows us that Christ's relationship to His church is like a husband and a wife in marriage.

The church submits to Christ because He is the head of the church. The voluntary submission of the church requires the willingness of the church to accept a lower rank than Christ. The church must set aside all pride accepting with humility the status God has assigned.

[I think we are all on the same page, but let's be clear. The "church" is not the building with the steeple sitting up on the roof. . We (you and me) as Christians are the church. We must accept that God has assigned us a lower rank than Jesus.]

If Christ obeyed God in complete subjection and humility (though being equal to God), is asking the woman to wear an external covering to show her respect to God really that

offensive?

Keep these thoughts in mind while we take a quick look at the word “nature.”

### The Meaning of Nature Should Be Determined by the Bible

Paul uses the word “nature” in verse 14.

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:14 NKJV

Some suggest “nature” refers to the culture of Corinth at the time the letter was written as though Paul is pointing to the lifestyle that existed or societal norms at the time.

As I suggested in the beginning, I believe the Bible must be read in the context of the whole book to obtain a complete understanding of what God is communicating to us.

In the book of Romans, Paul uses the word “nature” (not as the values, mores, or social norms found in the local community), but in the broader sense of our physical world.

In other words, “nature” relates to the things built into us as part of God’s design. In this respect, nature is an instinctive sense of what is fitting or right.

In nature there are innate biological differences between the two sexes that God has hardwired into us if you will.

For example, God instills in mankind a desire for sexual relations with the opposite sex.

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” Romans 1:26-27 NKJV

In nature, we desire the opposite sex. A same sex attraction is unnatural.

The argument suggested by some is that “nature” refers to the culture of Corinth at this specific time in history. However, this is inconsistent with the way Paul uses “nature” in Romans 1:26-27.

I see a strong parallel between Romans Chapter 1 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 for determining the correct meaning of “nature” as being those things that God has put in us as part of creation.

In nature men and women *instinctively understand there are differences* between male and female. Even small children recognize the difference in boys and girls.

Those in Rome had exchanged the natural uses of the opposite sex for what is against nature.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:14-15, Paul is arguing that even nature (the instinct God built into males and females) tells us that long hair on a woman brings honor whereas long hair on a man brings dishonor to himself.

Observe, Paul does not say that long hair on a man is sinful (as some teach). He says the long hair is a dishonor to the man, not a sin.

Let’s tie all of this together.

If the hair serves as the covering for the woman in prayer and prophesying, then the man needs to uncover his head by shaving his head to avoid dishonor to Jesus Christ, his spiritual head.

Hair is either the covering for both men and women in verses 4 and 5 or it is not.

The analogy to hair in verse 15 is an argument by Paul comparing the covering in the physical world (the woman’s hair) to the necessity for an external covering for the woman in prayer.

A man or a woman who fails or refuses to enter into prayer or prophesy with the head covering that God assigns brings dishonor and shame.

### The New Meaning of Head

I have provided you with my understanding for why the hair is not the covering for a woman, but there are a couple of other things that probably should be addressed because as you study this subject these will invariably come up.

There is a new modern day interpretation for the meaning of “head.”

The majority view is “head” means authority. This has been the accepted meaning for a really long time, (like for thousands of years).

In the past 25 years or so, some have begun to promote the idea that “head” in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians means “source.” Think of the head of the river or the source of the water in the river and you get the idea. This is a minority view, but becoming somewhat popular because it provides elasticity in other areas of gender roles.

Those teaching that head means “source” offer little reason for interpreting “head” as “source.” *Other than to undermine the husband being the head of the wife and being given the responsibility to rule in the home.*

*If source doesn't represent authority, then the husband has no right to rule his home.*

If the reason for defining “head” to mean “source” is an attempt to defeat the authority of a husband in the home, then the teaching runs directly contrary to several other passages of scripture.

Please take care to observe the husband is appointed by God to serve as head of the wife. This is not an option for the husband. God appoints the man to the role.

I find the attempt to redefine head to mean source is driven by a motive to get around God's design for male leadership. Thus, I accept the definition that has long been accepted that the word means authority.

### The Little Word “Anti”

Another question that sometimes arises for people is the tiny Greek word “anti” that appears in the Greek.

If you look at verses 13-15 with an interlinear, you will find the end of the sentence at verse 15 reads: “For the long hair instead of a covering is given to her.”

The Greek word for “instead” in the interlinear that I use is “anti” that is defined:

Strong's Concordance 473e

anti: over against, opposite, hence instead of, in comp. denotes contrast, requital, substitution, correspondence

Original Word:

Part of Speech: Preposition



Transliteration: anti

Phonetic Spelling: (an-tee')

Definition: over against, opposite, instead of

Usage: (a) instead of, in return for, over against, opposite, in exchange for, as a substitute for, (b) on my behalf, (c) wherefore, because.

HELPS Word-studies

473 antí (a preposition) – properly, opposite, corresponding to, off-setting (over-against); (figuratively) "in place of," i.e. what substitutes (serves as an equivalent, what is proportional).

One common use of the English use of “anti” is well-illustrated by the venom injected by a snake bite. The snake injects venom that is poisonous to the human. The doctor gives the “anti-venom” or the drug to counteract or do the exact opposite reaction of what the snake intended to do to you.

However, many translations don’t use “anti” as the opposite, like in the snake bite example.

The majority of Bible translations render the word ‘anti’ as our English word “for.”

“For” in English is more likely to mean with a purpose, “I run for exercise.”

“For” is also used to mean in connection with, “The equipment is for the army.”

“For” can mean as suiting the purpose or need of something, “Medicine is for the sick person.”

In Greek, “anti” is translated in other places as the word “for.” A good example is, “an eye for an eye.” See Matthew 5:38

Because verses 13-15 are a metaphor or analogy, then translating “anti” as “for” better fits the passage.

Translating “anti” to meaning “opposing” would interfere with the analogy being presented by Paul.

If verses 13-15 are to be read with “anti” translated to mean “opposed” then verse 13-15 would read the hair is not the covering.

In the context of the figurative speech device that Paul employs in verses 13-15, consistency requires a meaning that fits the context.

The English word “for” is consistent with Paul’s analogy of comparing the lack of hair in the natural world to the shame a woman should have for praying or prophesying without a covering.

### A Woman Should Have a Symbol of Authority on Her Head

The NKJV reads the woman is to have a “symbol of authority” on her head.

“For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. “ 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:10 NKJV

Several other translations use “symbol of authority” while others use similar words (such as sign of authority, power on her head, as a sign of her authority, or token of authority).

The Greek word for authority used in verse 10 is “Exousian.”

The root word is defined in Strong’s Concordance (the definitions section) as:

exousia: power to act, authority  
Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine  
Transliteration: exousia  
Phonetic Spelling: (ex-oo-see'-ah)  
Definition: power to act, authority  
Usage: (a) power, authority, weight, especially: moral authority, influence, (b) in a quasi-personal sense, derived from later Judaism, of a spiritual power, and hence of an earthly power.

The words “symbol of” are added in most translations. These words are not present when you read an interlinear that gives the actual Greek words.

The translators seem to largely agree that adding these words (or those similar in meaning) help us to understand what is being stated.

My Greek interlinear reads: “Because of this ought the woman authority to have on the head on account of the angels.”

The meaning of these words in Greek language or parlance, like other parts of the passage,

have been the source of disagreement. I will not attempt to give a review of every interpretation of “symbol of authority.”

Whenever possible, I like to find the same word in the Bible to see how it is used in other parts of the scriptures. Generally this results in a consistent approach to the interpretation of the Bible.

By definition, “exousia” is a power to act. See 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:9; 9:4-5; 9:12; and 9:18 for a few other instances where the word is used.

We should be consistent in our use of words. If the “exousia” means the power of someone to perform some act, then we should interpret “exousia” the same way in verse 10 where the phrase “symbol of authority” appears.

If we apply the same meaning for 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:10 as the other places where the word is used, then the woman is being given an authority or the power to do some act.

The question then becomes, what is this power the woman is given?

The topic under discussion is prayer or prophesy. A consistent use of the word then indicates this is a power or authority that God provides to the woman to enter the spiritual sphere for prayer and prophesy.

Paul has already explained that the woman ranks under man.

In a normal chain of command, a person only speaks to the person over them. It is not customary to jump rank in the communications.

For example, a man does not speak directly to God. Men pray through Jesus Christ to communicate with God. Jesus serves as a mediator between man and God.

The woman would be in a similar situation. She would be required to go to her head, the man. In turn, the man would go to Christ on her behalf (assuming he felt the matter deserved attention).

God in his wisdom decided the woman should have the same access as the man to pray (and subject to other limitations prophesy).

The authority has been granted to the woman to jump over the man in her prayers as opposed to having to go through him. However, this leads to a possible concern about

whether the woman has engaged in misconduct.

Is the woman breaking rank or acting insubordinate by leaving her proper place to speak to Jesus, the one who sits and ranks over the man?

Imagine if you will a lowly private in the army who on his own determines to speak directly to the General. This is going to create a real disturbance. The private just ignored rank and went straight to the top. The officers in the intervening chain of command are not going to be happy. More than likely, the other privates in the army are also going to see this as highly irregular and not in traditional army etiquette.

The head covering demonstrates the woman is entering into the spiritual realm as a matter of the right granted to her.

This covering shows to everyone that she is not jumping the chain of command or acting insubordinately. In effect, the General [God] in our analogy has said the woman may approach Him directly.

So going back to the Army, there is no breach of etiquette if the private has been granted permission by the General to approach. Maybe it's an emergency or something. The General may have some reason for preferring hearing from the mouth of the private.

Like her male counterpart who is granted permission to go to God, the woman also is vested with the rights in prayer and prophesy. (She is, however, subject to the other limitations imposed upon a woman for silence in the churches, etc.)

We do not simply barge into the presence of God without His express permission.

He has given all of us (male and female) permission to come into His realm, but there are obligations to enter that include showing reverence and honor to Him.

### The Symbol of Authority Is Like a Badge or Uniform

If a person enters a military base without the proper uniform, the military police will quickly act. The uniform is required to be there.

The woman's head covering acts like a uniform or a badge that tells everyone that she is lawfully authorized to be present in the spiritual world talking to God in prayer.

The man's badge, if you will, is permanently visible so long as he does not cover it up.

The woman exhibits her badge by wearing an external head covering that signals to the angels that she also has authority from God to be present in the spiritual realm when engaged in prayer and prophesy.

Without this symbol establishing her authority or the power to engage in prayer or prophesy, then she gives the appearance of breaking rank. She appears to be disorderly in not following what would be a typical chain of command.

This concept of having a symbol of authority on her head has been a source of error and confusion by a large number of commentators.

These commentators have improperly linked the Greek word “exousin” on the head in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:10 to the woman’s obligation for submission in marriage in Ephesians 5:22.

I too made this mistake for a long time.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:3 is about rank and not about marital subjection as we will discuss in greater detail in just a moment.

A significant number of commentators inappropriately combine the two separate concepts of rank in spiritual hierarchy with the teaching of “submission” of the woman to her husband in marriage.

Both ideas are clearly taught in the Bible, *but the concepts are not both taught in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11.*

The obligation in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 is a duty to show honor to God’s hierarchy that has been established. This is about headship and status.

A wife’s responsibility to submit to her husband is a separate, independent duty she owes to yield in the marriage relationship.

In marriage, the two obligations operate in close parallel for a woman. However, these are two independent obligations, not to be run together into one.

It is axiomatic that submission to God is part of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11.

We submit to the instructions for appropriate head covering or we don’t.

Thus, submission is involved in head covering, but it is submission to God.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is about rank, not marriage. Find the word marriage or wedding or any other word that infers the text is about being married or unmarried. It's not there. [The ESV uses the word "wife." I will get to that later.]

Numerous commentaries mistakenly relate this symbol of authority on a woman's head as a sign of marital submission to the woman's husband. The text in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is silent on the woman submitting to a husband.

Confusion results when the requirement for head covering by a woman is directly linked to the command for submission by the woman to her husband in marriage because he is her head.

Submission to the husband is undeniably commanded in marriage, but a woman does not show submission to her husband by covering her head.

If this were the case, then the woman would need to be covered at all times. However, the head covering command in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 states the covering is only demanded when the woman is engaged in prayer or prophesying.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is about the hierarchy in the spiritual realm with the vertical rank of (1) God to Christ, (2) Jesus to man, and finally (3) man to woman.

This does not mean that a woman is in subjection to all males. She is not.

A manager in a company outranks a normal employee, whether or not the employee directly reports to that specific manager. For example, the Vice President of Marketing has a higher rank than a woman working in the accounting department who does not report to the marketing V.P.

The symbol of authority is not that difficult to understand *unless someone chooses to make it complicated.*

The woman is lower in rank than man. The context of the woman holding a lower rank than man is carried across verses 1-16.

It is critical that the woman not only know her place or her role, *but that she needs to show a physical sign to others that she accepts the rank that God assigned.*

(Yep! I can feel those dagger eyes glaring at me! I said the woman needs to know her place).

In our culture, a man saying a woman should know her place will get you “cancelled.” But please consider just how much we should trust our culture. It has reached the point that culture tells us there is no difference in men and women, despite very obvious biological differences.

### Our Culture is Filled with Symbols of Power and Authority

Symbols of rank or office are present all through countless aspects of life. These symbols are a good thing!

The military has uniforms and insignias showing the hierarchy for soldiers, sailors, and those serving our country.

Doctors and nurses wear specific clothing in various medical settings so it is clearly understood who has charge.

Fire departments signify rank and authority with uniforms and special types of dress.

All of these visual displays are required insignia for a person to work there. It’s not an option or a choice.

Almost intuitively, we understand *there is no submission to other branches of authority* outside of our direct head.

For instance, an Admiral in the U.S. Navy ranks far higher than a regular civilian like me. Just because he outranks me doesn’t mean that I have to listen to his orders. I give honor to his rank, but I am not in subjection to him.

As another illustration, a nurse owes no obligation to submit or yield to the fire marshal who enters the emergency room giving medical advice or instructions. The nurse is perfectly free to disregard the directions of the fire marshal to start an IV of pain medication. The nurse is in subjection to the hospital, not the fire department.

A wife must be in subjection to her husband, *but this involves a distinct obligation separate and apart from head covering*. She is not however in submission to every other man. The wife only has one head at any given time.

Head covering involves activities in the spiritual realm while marital subjection is about yielding obedience in the physical world.

Women work in every industry and every field on the planet. They wear uniforms, special clothes showing status or rank in many of these occupations. There seems to be little complaint in a woman being required to acknowledge her station in her profession.

Ask yourself, why does a woman being told by her Creator that she needs to demonstrate her respect by covering her head and hair with an artificial covering generate so much angst?

### The Refusal to Wear the Badge or Uniform Creates Chaos with the Angels

The angels are a little above man and have witnessed other angels who left their proper abode or station assigned by God. The fallen angels refused to accept the station or rank God gave to them. Jude 6-7

The angels have seen and observed humans since creation and know that man reflects God's glory while woman is the glory of man.

Angels witnessed man's fall. They saw Eve step out of her role when she was deceived and observed Adam's rebellion in listening to his wife instead of keeping God's one simple instruction.

The refusal of a woman to cover her head in the presence of God creates a disturbance among the angels (though Paul does not supply the details).

We can, however, glean there is significance in the woman refusing to cover her head.

When a woman refuses to cover her head with an external covering, the angels see the woman leaving her assigned station or rank. The result is chaos in the spiritual realm.

The angels involvement has numerous explanations, none of those that can be 100% confirmed from my examination.

We don't have to understand every detail of this verse to observe two things are certain.

First, the involvement of the angels spans more than just the time period of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, i.e., disposing of the argument that the head covering commands only applied to Corinth back then.



Second, *the head covering instructions are far more serious than most people like to think.* If the angels are troubled by a woman not covering her head, then we should also be concerned.

Consider carefully verses 1-16 and that angels are among the reasons for a woman to have a symbol of authority on her head.

The message is clear, these verses involve the heavenly realm in some respect. Knowing this, we should pay special attention to the instructions because the angels are watching.

Undoubtedly, God knows what the angels see and hear.

We should remember that God sees everything the angels see!

### A Wife or a Woman; There is a Difference!

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4 and 5, notice the word “every” that comes from the Greek word “pas” translated as “every.”

“Every” means no restrictions, no limitations. It means the whole of every kind.

“Every man” includes the married and the unmarried - men are men based upon biological determination, not by marital status.

“Every woman” includes the whole of every kind, both those who are married and those who are not married.

Women are female based upon the biological determination by God, not a decision to get married.

Now it is true that the word for woman “gyne” is sometimes translated wife.

I reviewed 32 different translations for verse 5 to see how the Greek word “gyne” was translated in English. All but one used the word “woman” (31 used woman and 1 used wife).

We are assigned our biological sex while still in our mother’s womb. Our gender is determined by God before we are born.

Based solely upon our gender (and entirely unrelated to marriage), the instructions to enter

into the spiritual realm before God in prayer or prophesying involve doing what God has commanded.

Males do not cover their heads, while females do.

Christ is head of man. This is a vertical relationship in that Christ is above man.

Man is head of woman. This is also a vertical relationship in which man is above woman. [Observe, I did not say the husband is head of the wife.]

Proper head covering applies exclusively upon the gender that God gave to us regardless of marital status.

The requirement for a man to be uncovered includes all men, not just those who are married.

A 75-year old man who never married is required to remove his hat upon entering the spiritual realm (or entering into the presence of God) in prayer or prophesying. Removing the hat has nothing to do with being married!

Likewise, a woman, regardless of marital status must cover her head because she ranks below man in God's assigned hierarchy.

Therefore, a woman, whether married or unmarried, widowed, or still in her father's home must cover her head in prayer and prophesying.

#### Prayer Must Be Performed According to God's Divine Plan

The right to prayer comes with requirements and limitations.

One requirement for our prayers to be heard by God is that we must pray through Jesus. John 14:6

For your prayers to reach God, access is by communication through Jesus. John 14:12-14 He is our Mediator. This is a limitation on the authority granted to us to pray to God. If we want to talk with God, then we must approach Him through Jesus.

Otherwise the door is closed. The only way to the Father is through Jesus Christ.

Another requirement is that we must enter into His presence with humility and reverence

for Him. This reverence and humility are shown by the head covering that He designated for our respective sex or gender. This means no covering for the man.

This reverence is the willingness to “hear” God’s laws and requirements. Consider for a moment:

“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. Proverbs 28:9 NKJV

A person who stops listening to God and His law sends up prayers that are an abomination. That’s really strong language for God to declare a person’s prayers coming up to heaven to Him as an abomination.

An abomination is something regarded with disgust or hatred. God says that anyone who will not listen to His commands sends up prayers that He detests,

The proper head covering by men and women is spelled out in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11.

The instructions are to demonstrate that we know our place or station. Keeping one’s assigned station or rank is critically important to God. He is about order, not disorder.

Refusing to hear His law results in our prayers being an abomination.

### The Head of Woman

Who is the unmarried woman’s specific head?

I would argue her father is her assigned head until she marries. Upon marriage, the headship is transferred from the father to her husband to prevent the woman having two heads who may give incompatible instructions that cannot be accomplished. The closest scripture that I find in support for the father as the head of an unmarried woman is Numbers 30:1-16.

In contrast, a male never has any head other than Christ. A boy’s father is not his head. An elder in the church is not the head of a male congregant. Only Christ is the head of a male and this begins at birth.

This does not mean that a boy (male child) is not under subjection to his parents. All children are subject to their father and mother until grown. Once more, the need to keep clearly in mind the difference between headship and subjection.

Interestingly, we have a non-binding tradition in the United States for the bride's father to hand her off in the wedding ceremony to the husband. Is this commonly seen wedding ritual conclusive proof of my opinion?

It is not, but it is curious that we commonly see a symbolic passing of the woman from the woman's father to the husband when the minister asks, "Who gives this woman"?

I am old enough to recall the time that mothers began to want the father to say, "Her mother and I give her in marriage."

Thinking back, the change in the words the father spoke to including the mother was during the period that women all across the country were burning their bras in giant fires and shortly after they stopped wearing head coverings to church.

### Don't Shake Your Fist at God

Extremely important in all aspects of God's role for women is that **God has made this determination** - not man! God is the One saying this, not the woman's husband or the male elders of the church.

The emotional reaction by some women (*that this is something that men have done to women*) defies the reality that God has done this!

Before shaking a fist at God, there are a lot of accounts in the Bible of people asked to endure significantly more than putting on a scarf or head covering.

Did Job feel like he got a raw deal?

Do Christians who suffered severe persecution, beatings, painful deaths get a fair deal compared to you and me?

How about His only begotten Son - what did He deserve?

Having a proper perspective is essential.

We are discussing head covering instructions to both sexes.

Being asked to wear or not wear something is not harsh or unfair to either gender. It's just what we are told to do.

A scarf or head covering is a symbol showing the woman understands and yields to her position of a rank underneath men in general. Significantly, this does not mean a woman must be in submission to every male or every man. She does not because the headship under discussion in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is not about a woman's submission to her husband in marriage.

It is about submission to God!

Woman being the *glory of man* while man is the glory of God certainly does not sound like "equality." There's a reason for that.

*It's not equality* - just like a worker is not equal to his supervisor in rank - God appointed the woman in a role underneath the man.

The fact that I can't dribble, jump, and score in basketball means that I am not equal to those NBA players who get massive contracts to play. Whether I like it or not, I am not equal.

The traffic cop is not equal to the Chief of Police. So what, he's not equal to the head honcho!

People (who want everyone to be "equal") don't like the fact that God gives the man a different rank - a higher rank than a woman - they don't like that *God says the man is superior in rank*.

Yes, I know! I just said the man has a superior rank. Well, it's just like in the military where superior officers have a higher rank. God assigns our rank and we are in no position to argue.

Rank has absolutely nothing to do with the value of women to Him.

Women are made in the image of God, just like men. God loves women!

God loves me just as much as those NBA players who jump, dribble, and score a lot of points on the court.

Many professed Christians don't like the notion that God has rules for head gear.

God is well aware people will reject His design. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."

Matthew 7:13 NKJV

The Creator does not need my approval or yours. He is God! He can make any rules and impose any symbols that He chooses!

### What If I Don't Understand The Reason For Head Covering?

Well, let's break it down as much as we are able.

It's not difficult to understand that approaching the Most High God in prayer must be done in reverence and awe.

Similarly, it's not hard to realize that anything written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is significant (even if we may not understand exactly why).

There are numerous examples in the Bible where a person obeyed without a clear understanding as to the reason for the command.

For instance, Abraham, while still known as Abram, was told to leave his family, his town, and all that he knew. He was 75 years old and began to move across the wilderness living in a tent. The narrative begins in Genesis Chapter 12.

Eventually Abraham is told to sacrifice the son that God had promised to give him as a burnt offering on an alter. Genesis 22

Did Abraham understand why God said to sacrifice his only child (the child that was going to make him a great nation)? No, he did not.

The next morning, early in the morning, Abraham set off with Isaac and demonstrated the complete willingness to do what God commanded.

We don't have to understand the reasons for why God commands something to be able to obey what He says.

God tells us the uniform to wear in His presence. Like Abraham, we can choose to obey (even when we may not entirely understand everything). Obedience, without understanding, is biblical faith. It's bibtrust in God!

## A Woman Not Wearing a Covering Over Her Hair Dishonors Her Head

The Bible undeniably states that a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her 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.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5  
NKJV

Who is dishonored?

Once married, a woman dishonors her husband by praying or prophesying with an uncovered head.

What then is the significance of the woman who dishonors her husband?

Why does it matter?

*Who cares?*

Undisputably many, many husbands are prideful, sinful, and routinely annoying to their wives.

Not to mention that the typical Christian husband in America probably isn't going to complain about the “dishonor.”

The reality is the average, ordinary husband *probably doesn't feel any “dishonor”* by the wife refusing to cover her head.

So a fair question arises, does this “dishonor” seriously make any difference (especially if the husband doesn't seem to care)?

I have been married for a long time (my wife says it feels like a lot longer).

Do I feel dishonor because she does not cover her head in prayer?

Nope, on an emotional level I do not feel any dishonor because she does not cover.

So then why does it matter?

*The focus is not on how the man feels from an emotional state of mind.*

The emotional feeling of the husband is not the point, nor is God's concern that the husband's pride might somehow be offended.

God's pronouncement is that the woman's conduct brings dishonor. God's objective determination is sufficient.

The dishonor is not about *the husband's internal emotions* (or the internal feelings of a father if the daughter is not married).

Here's an example to illustrate the point that the husband's emotional state of feeling honor or dishonor is not the central issue.

The sin in going naked at the beach is obvious. However, the participants may not feel any shame. A husband may not feel any dishonor as his wife walks around naked in front of everyone.

The sinful nature of the wife being unclothed is not determined *by how her husband feels* about her not wearing clothes. He may be perfectly fine with her public appearance.

The husband's emotional reaction to the wife not wearing clothes to cover herself *does not make her actions any less sinful*.

The same holds true with the father who approves of his daughter's public nakedness. A weirdo father may not feel any dishonor by his daughter parading herself around without clothes.

Whether the husband or father feels dishonor when his wife or daughter prays uncovered is truly not the point. It is ultimately God that is being dishonored by the wife showing dishonor to the man He created.

A woman who dishonors the head that God appointed - dishonors God.

She also demonstrates disrespect for Christ because He is the head of the man.

What if the woman doesn't realize that she is demonstrating dishonor?

*Dishonor remains dishonor, though it results from the lack of knowledge.*



Going back to the beach example with the naked wife. She may not realize what she is doing is sinful, but it is.

A woman may not realize that she is dishonoring anyone, but she is.

Sinful acts can be performed with a pure conscious.

Paul before his conversion persecuted the church with zeal believing with all his heart that he was doing what was right. He oppressed Christians and locked them in prison. He did these things in complete ignorance. He held a pure conscious and believed his actions to be righteous.

But he wholly repented upon learning the truth.

Israel's zeal for God without knowledge offers another example for us.

Paul writes in the book of Romans:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:1-4 NKJV (Underling added)

Can a spiritually zealous woman bring dishonor due to lack of knowledge about the need for appropriate head covering in prayer?

In light of Paul’s comments on zeal without knowledge, it is certainly something to consider.

I believe the answer is that she absolutely can show dishonor *without meaning to do so*.

This Is a Minor Issue;  
Too Much Focus On One Little Part of the Bible

A considerable number of brethren argue with great passion that this is a tiny detail in the Bible and certainly not worth much weight.

In response, I argue that every word in the Bible is pure because it comes from God.

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.” Proverbs 30:5-6

Some assert it is sinful for me to be overly technical and *that I am a “legalist.”*

“Legalism” has become a trendy way to toss out anything in the Bible that doesn’t suit us.

The term is used in a pejorative sense to label the views of someone else in way to essentially cancel any meaningful discussion over the topic.

“He’s just being a legalist, don’t listen to him!”

The Jews tried to disregard Jesus by calling him a carpenter’s son, i.e., discredit Him.

The truth is that trying to keep and follow all of God’s commands is not legalism, it’s just plain old-fashioned “obedience.”

“Legalism” is an obsession with rules, but *not for the sake of observing the principles and intent of God*. To the contrary, legalism puts the focus on the details so that one can show himself better than others, i.e., elevate himself.

The solution to legalism is not to throw out all the rules.

In Matthew 23:23-28 Jesus said the weightier matters should have been done *without leaving the others undone*.

Jesus didn’t tell the Jewish leaders, “Hey, don’t sweat the small stuff!”

Jesus said they should have done the weightier matters of the law *without leaving the others undone*.

Jesus was very familiar with “legalism.” The Pharisees had mastered the art and placed heavy burdens upon the Jewish people that no one could keep. Jesus constantly and repeatedly confronted the Jewish leaders for their legalistic teachings.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift

that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it." Matthew 23:16 - 22 NKJV

Oh yeah, the Pharisees loved to elevate themselves with "legalism!"

Jesus also seemed to give credence to the idea that some commands are weightier than others meaning some commands seem to have greater importance. *We should pay close attention to what He said about the **less weighty things**.*

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" Matthew 23:23-24 NKJV

Jesus tells the scribes and Pharisees that they should have done the weightier matters of the law without leaving the others things of lesser weight undone.

In short, taking care of the weightier matters doesn't excuse us for not doing the lesser things.

Here's a different perspective, what could possibly have any more weight than showing God and Christ the honor They so richly deserve?

Is there any sin that is greater than showing dishonor to Christ and God?

I fail to see how we explain to God our love for Him when we fail to observe something so simple as obedience to head covering.

You're a Man! Head Covering Doesn't Affect You Like It Does a Woman!

I see head covering as a "big deal!"

Some woman may reply, "Sure, it's fine for you to tell me to wear a covering since it doesn't affect you!"

In reality, it does impact me (and every husband and father).

The husband serves as the head of the home with the obligation to teach. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35 (Hey, that's the same book that we're studying!)

Men are also charged with leadership in the church that includes teaching on every topic including head covering.

The first step to compliance with appropriate head covering must come from men willing to be ridiculed, laughed at, mocked, and made fun of. I can assure that teaching this subject will get you some of this!

So if as a man if I have to teach and exhort others, then it affects me!

Men it is high time to step up!

The obligation to teach on this subject rests upon us!

Now it's time to turn the question around the other way, why is this simple act such a problem for women today?

Is the concept difficult to grasp?

Is the act really difficult or challenging to accomplish?

The servants of Naaman asked him, if God asked you to do something great, would you? 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 5:13

As a woman, if covering your head is asking you to do something "great", then the question becomes "will you do it"?

Assuming it's something small and insignificant, will you do that?

Head covering for a woman is either a "great thing" or a "little thing."

Any way you slice it, it's a God thing!

The Importance of Symbols in Christianity

Are symbols important to Christians?

Absolutely!

Baptism means more than getting dunked in water! The symbolism is the old man is buried in death and the new man raised to eternal life. Romans 6:2-11 There is nothing magic about the water. Baptism is a demonstration of obedience through our faith.

Objectively speaking in human terms, the practice of having someone dunk you under the water in front of a bunch of spectators rings of fraternity hazing. In the same fashion, wearing a head covering smells a lot like a sorority or club induction ritual.

The act of baptism that so many of us take very seriously makes about as much sense as a covering on a woman's head!

I am not discounting the importance and need to be baptized. I am trying to direct your attention to how symbols play a huge part in the Christian walk or journey.

The Lord's Supper - eat my body, drink my blood! A ritual of eating a small cracker and drinking a tiny amount of grape juice pretending that it is the body and blood of Jesus.

Really?

Sounds a little far-fetched for someone unfamiliar with the Bible and Jesus Himself instituted the practice.

Because we understand and internalize these rituals - we readily find them acceptable. But for those without a Bible background, these practices are just as strange as a woman covering her head (or a man removing his cap).

Having tried to explain the Lord's Supper to people who had limited Bible knowledge, I can assure you that some find the tradition of the Lord's Supper every bit as strange as requiring a woman to wear a cloth covering.

Do I consider the Lord's Supper significant?

Well, "significant" isn't a strong enough word.

Jesus said to do this in remembrance of Me. I am wholly trusting on Him having given His body and His blood on the cross as the sacrifice for my sins - the only hope that I have for eternal life.

With the Lord's Supper in the same chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 as the head covering commands, how do we reconcile the dismissal of one symbol while adhering to

the other symbol?

Many will say that the woman wearing a piece of cloth on her head just does not make any sense; there is no logic behind the premise. It's silly!"

Let's see what else Paul told the Corinthians about another symbol Christians hold dear, i.e., the symbol of the cross. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18-31:

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? *Where is the disputer of this age?* Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, *it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached* to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18-31 NKJV (Bold, italics, and underline added)

The culture today judges the practice of head covering as foolish. Those who engage in the practice are mocked, laughed at, and made fun of!

The ridicule is not always done face to face with them, but with jokes, sly glances, and a haughty attitude. They see a woman wearing a scarf or veil as outdated and foolish.

We must never forget the Bible is chocked full of accounts of people doing ridiculous things for reasons they could not explain. 2 Kings 5:1-19 gives the details of Naaman who was told to dip seven times in the dirty, filthy Jordan river to be cleansed of his leprosy.

Bible students love to discuss the obedience and all the nuances of what would have happened if he only went down six times, gone to a cleaner river, etc.

Dipping in the Jordan to cure leprosy is clearly foolish from a human perspective (and it was equally clownish several thousands of years ago). No scientific or medical theory would support the idea, but . . . is there a lesson for us?

Naaman's action required *unbelievable humility*. He was an extremely powerful and important man in his government. He was a high ranking officer who had the ear of the king of Syria. 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 5:1-15

Assume that Naaman had come up out of the water still having leprosy. Just think how the Jews would have laughed about the stupid Syrian commander who was tricked by a cagey old prophet into bathing in a dirty river!

Naaman would have been mocked for thousands of years for believing the silly fairytale that dipping exactly seven times in dirty water would cure him.

Can we see any correlation between Naaman's willingness to humble himself and our own humility in teaching and practicing a head covering rite that seems equally outlandish?

Symbols in the Bible do not necessarily involve positive symbols such as the Lord's Supper and the cross that represent the forgiveness of our sins.

Some symbols are demonic, evil, and ungodly.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:1-13 discusses eating foods offered to idols.

The Corinthians were told to eat anything and everything (even meat offered to idols), it doesn't matter!

Unless . . . there is someone that may believe the offering to an idols has meaning.

“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those

things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:9-12 NKJV

Paul uses rhetorical questions to make his point that eating in an idol’s temple might cause a weak brother to eat things offered to idols against his conscious.

The questions are asked to bring the reader to the realization that eating things offered to idols is perfectly fine *unless it might cause another to stumble*.

Stop and think for just a moment - a person can be eternally lost or perish by eating meat offered to an idol. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:11 One’s soul can be cast into an eternal hell over eating perfectly good food simply because there is an associated symbolic meaning.

Does this teaching about eating meats offered to idols apply today?

Yes, it is just as applicable today as it was 2,000 years ago. God will not approve of people offering sacrifices to idols today, nor was the practice simply a “cultural thing” in Corinth.

Paul expounds in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 10,

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake; for “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness. If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake. But if anyone says to you, “This was offered to idols,” do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience’ sake; for “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness.” “Conscience,” I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:25-29 NKJV

Paul says to eat whatever they put on your plate. Don’t even ask any questions about what it is or if it involves an idol. Just eat it.

But . . . if someone tells you that it was offered to an idol, then don’t eat it!

The head covering instructions are sandwiched between the evil symbol of eating meat offered to idols and the precious symbol of the Lord’s Supper.

Let’s see. . . . . the negative symbol of eating food offered to an idol can cause me to perish.



The taking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner will make me guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:29

But the symbolic meaning of the woman placing a cloth covering over her head that we find inserted between these other two symbols can be ignored?

Sounds a bit like "picking and choosing" to me.

Our physical actions on earth carry symbolic meaning in the spiritual realm that are highly substantive and important.

The symbols can be positive reinforcement about God, salvation, and giving praise, glory and honor to God and Christ. Similarly, physical acts can be performed with a symbolic meaning opposed to God that are sinful, such as idol worship.

We send a message or communicate something regardless of what we do.

We communicate to those around us when we observe a scriptural ritual or when we do not.

Let's use the Lord's Supper to illustrate what I mean. Taking of the Lord's Supper proclaims Christ's death until He comes. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:26

A visitor who does not participate in the sacred communion sends a message to the rest sitting in the pews that he is not a believer, not a Christian.

When we sit next to a brother or sister who abstains from the Lord's Supper, it may signal a struggle with sin or temptation that has overwhelmed them. This brother or sister may be choosing not to eat to avoid doing so in an unworthy manner. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:27

This brother or sister may know there is an unresolved issue with another. Matthew 5:23-24 (context being bringing a gift to the altar, but the sentiment to first be reconciled to our brother is applicable).

My point is that communication is taking place no matter what we choose.

The head covering symbols of removing a man's covering (and the woman adding a covering to her head) are equally meaningful and graphic. These symbolic representations tell God, the angels, and all those around us that we profess God is sovereign. He has commissioned our rank. We accept the role that He has given to us.

## A Light Upon a Hill

Assuming that I show you two photographs of women; one with long hair wearing a covering on her head similar to the bonnets in the television show Little House on the Prairie. Then I show you a photograph of the other woman with short hair without any covering on her head.

If I ask which woman is a Christian who accepts that God commands a wife to submit, obey, and respect her husband?

Any guesses on how many people will choose the woman with the bonnet?

In a fallen world where Christians are supposed to be different from the world and lights upon a hill, how does the world see people who:

- affirmatively and readily speak up about God's gender roles for men and women?
- live out God's instructions for the wife to be obedient, reverent, and submissive?
- a woman who wears a covering on her head to worship?
- a man whose wife chooses to wear a covering on her head to services?
- a father who requires his daughters who are living under his roof to properly cover?

These are rhetorical questions. I know the answers. And I believe that you know the answers too. So, how can we in good faith say these answers are culturally irrelevant?

## Don't Mess with My Liberty - "I'm Free!"

Another objection contending against a woman having to veil or cover her head is what I call the "I'm Free" theory.

Basically, this argument is that the distinction between male and female no longer exists. Therefore, all these old fashioned, outdated ideas of male/female roles including a woman having to cover her head don't apply anymore.

As their proof for the "I'm Free" argument, the proponents cite Galatians 3:28.

In Galatians 3:28 NKJV, we read "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." (Bold added)

There it is, we just read it!

There is neither male nor female. We're all just one big happy unisex family!

The majority of you can skip this section, but unfortunately, I am compelled to dismantle the argument that others preach. [Sadly, I have even come to hear Christians (including sisters that have been stellar Bible students over the years) starting to parrot this mantra about there being no male or female in Christ with overtones of having equal rank to men.]

The context of the book of Galatians is Paul making a contrast between no salvation under the Old Law and the hope for salvation under the New Covenant.

Paul was seemingly concerned and worried that some were returning to the requirements of the Old Law. In Galatians, Paul is arguing to the brethren that their salvation is only found in gospel of Jesus Christ, not under the principles of the Old Law that can only bring about eternal death.

Paul is *not* abolishing the gender roles in the Bible that God assigned (despite the misuse of this verse by untold numbers of *so called Christians* deceiving others). Read the context!

It is truly disingenuous to “proof text” or take a verse out of the context in which it was written. Those who grab hold of the verse for a “proof text” abuse the context. [I am trying to be polite, but using a proof text is wrong.]

We have all seen video cuts in podcasts and news shows where a video clip is cut and edited to give a false impression. Taking a verse (or part of a verse) to prove something the Bible does not say is deceitful. Even well-meaning Christians fall prey to “proof texting” by quoting a Bible verse they memorized to support something that is not taught by the context. While this may be done at times with a pure conscious, it is nonetheless error.

The Bible is often said to be its own best commentary. So let's look at other parts of the New Testament to test the idea that there are neither slave, nor free; male nor female.

Please take time to read the book of Philemon, another letter written by the apostle Paul.

In Philemon, we learn about a man by the name of Onesimus who was a runaway slave. He left his master Philemon and headed off to freedom.

Hey, it is hard to blame a man for wanting to be free!

On his journey to freedom, Onesimus ran into Paul and was taught the gospel. Onesimus became a Christian. Life was grand! Onesimus was free of his earthly master and now free in Christ Jesus!

The deal is that Paul told Onesimus that he had to return to his master, Philemon!

Onesimus was still a slave in the flesh even though he became a Christian, thus free in Christ.

Paul told Onesimus that it was necessary to fulfill *his obligations as a slave*, thus return to his master. Returning to a master as a runaway slave was a dangerous proposition. The penalties could be severe!

If the liberty and freedom in Galatians 3:28 is a carnal, fleshly liberation, then Onesimus would not have been expected to return to a life of slavery.

Onesimus is one more example of a man who was told to do something very foolish from a worldly perspective.

For real! What kind of an idiot elects to give up his new found freedom to go back to being a slave (risking the brutal punishment of having been a runaway).

In faith in the Lord and the joy of his spiritual freedom, Onesimus returned to his master.

Galatians 3:28 did not abolish slavery *in the flesh and likewise did not abolish male and female roles* in the physical world.

Those who take Galatians 3:28 out of context for a proof text to press for equity between males and females are teaching a false doctrine. They directly contradict the Bible's clear teaching about God's roles for men and women. He sees us as equal in personhood, but God has given men the higher rank.

In the spiritual realm with Christ as our King, there is no male or female, slave or free, Jew nor Greek. We are all one in Christ. *But, in the flesh, there remains male and female* as God created, Greek and Jew, and masters and slaves.

Don't Be Contentious! (the churches of God have no such custom)

Have you ever wondered why Paul spent half a chapter going over the head covering details, just to come to the end at verse 16 telling everyone not to be contentious.

**Like really!** Why'd he spend all that time and energy. . . only to come to the conclusion that it doesn't make any difference. *Therefore don't be argumentative about it!*

I don't know about you, but I often came away with the feeling of why did he waste my time providing all the details.

The whole discussion was confusing for 15 verses, then he just says . . . . . "Never mind."

Have you been taught that the "contentious brethren" are those who try to influence a woman to wear an artificial covering?

That's what I was taught!

Once a certain perspective is pressed into our brain, we as humans struggle to see reality.

For a simple illustration, as a kid the annual rifle season to hunt deer always brought the hunters from the city. These guys were itching to pull the trigger and eagerly came to the woods dead set on taking home a deer.

Every season brought accidental shootings when a city hunter clearly saw a deer, shot it, and then saw the true reality - it wasn't actually a deer. Before the trigger was pulled, the city hunter saw a deer just clear as day.

The running joke with my peers always ended with, "Okay, buddy! Just let me get my saddle off and you can have your deer!"

Once you have been taught that a passage has a specific meaning, then it becomes difficult to see the passage having any other meaning. Just like the city hunter with the image of a deer burning in his brain sees a "deer" as he kills a saddled horse, we struggle to read verse 16 as Paul meant it.

Jesus spoke to this principle of not seeing the truth when He told the multitudes that having eyes, they did not see. He called the Pharisees blind guides. For those that might not know, the Pharisees were the educated and religious leaders of the day. For more details see Mark 8:11-21

In short, the Pharisees “did not see the Messiah” standing in their presence doing miracles.

We like to think that “there’s no way that we could do something like that!”

Well, my friend, that is pride getting in the way. None of us are immune from our preconceived bias affecting our thinking.

In jury trials, there is a procedure called voir dire (the jurors are questioned to see if they hold predispositions about issues to be decided). If a man is accused of rape, then letting 12 women who have been raped decide his guilt or innocence will not give the man a fair trial.

Understandably, these women cannot be objective on the subject. In short, humans tend to see what we already believe (including me).

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:16, the Bible reads, “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”

The *warning against being contentious* is given to those who argue that a woman does **not need an artificial covering**.

Unfortunately, I formerly was one of the ones being contentious by asserting women did not need to externally cover their heads. I was wrong.

*The contentious folks are those who say no covering is needed, despite what Paul and the Holy Spirit had just instructed.*

Paul is saying “I have provided multiple reasons for a woman to cover her head. Anyone who doesn’t like what I just said, is just being contentious!”

I had to open my eyes to see before I was able to understand what Paul was saying. Much like the joke about “let me get my saddle off and you can have your deer,” I could not see the truth.

Like the city hunter, maybe you see the contentious person as being the one demanding a woman to wear a veil or cover.

In reality, that is not what verse 16 is telling the reader.

Paul is really saying that it would be *strange indeed for anyone to challenge the practice of women veiling or covering their heads*, i.e. an ordinance that was being universally observed throughout all the churches.

In explaining the “why” behind the proper head covering for both men and women, Paul gets to the end telling us, “That’s the way it is. If you don’t like it, then just keep quiet.”

Paul says, “we have no such custom.” Is Paul saying, we don’t have a custom of being contentious?

The Greek word translated for “contentious” is “philoneikos” that according to Strong’s Concordance (the definitions section) means fond of strife.

Paul just convicted himself! He’s contentious and fond of strife!

He talks about head covering for 15 verses. In the first 6 verses, Paul tells men not to cover their heads and instructs women to veil or cover their head.

Is Paul fond of strife (or in other words being contentious)?

If he is being contentious, then why not leave out the 15 verses altogether?

I recognize Paul was writing on a scroll without the benefit of a fancy word processor with a delete key. [I mean like I hit “delete” about 50 times a sentence!]

Considering the letter was going to be *read for over 2,000 years by Christians throughout the ages*, it sure seems like the head covering part should have been left out.

Blotting out these 15 verses would also avoid Paul being placed among the contentious, in violation of verse 16. Let’s not forget that it is Paul who said the woman should wear a covering.

One could ponder, why wasn’t Paul just inspired to start a new scroll?

Of course, that gets you wondering why the Holy Spirit inspired verses 1-15 in the first place.

If the first 15 verses telling women to cover their heads is contentious, it is indeed curious the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these verses.

Reading verse 16 *to mean* that those who oppose a woman wearing a veil or covering are the contentious fits better with the passage being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

I just cannot see the Holy Spirit inspiring Paul to write 15 verses of contentious arguments before getting to verse 16 to let everyone know to avoid doing what Paul just did.

In order to understand the command (not to be contentious about the subject of head covering), you have to *first* understand who Paul is telling not to fight over the issue.

If you look back up to verse 2, we find the answer.

Paul is giving praise to the church for keeping the traditions that he had previously delivered to them. The traditions were for the men not to cover their heads and praising the women who wore an external covering over their hair.

In praising them, Paul has just given his approval and endorsed the practice of women covering or veiling their heads with an external cloth (and praised the men for not wearing any kind of covering).

In this regard the Corinthians were keeping the apostolic tradition that he delivered to them, therefore they were the ones receiving Paul's approval.

The ones who opposed head covering were the ones fond of strife.

Remember Paul has heard there are divisions in the church. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:10-13

Chloe's household had reported to Paul there were quarrels with some claiming to follow Paul while others said "I am of Apollos" or "I am of Cephas."

Knowing there were already factions in the church, it is unimaginable that Paul would bring up a woman needing to cover her head if the other apostles did not preach the same. Doing so would just add another source of friction for continued divisions.

Caveat: The English word "custom" in verse 16 of the NKJV sounds a lot like "traditions" or the word from verse 1, but it is not.

The Greek word in verse 16 is "synetheian" defined as habit or habitual use. [Strong's Concordance (the definition section)]

As you read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 don't confuse "traditions" that are commands with the



for “customs” that are more of a practice or habit.

In English these words have a much closer meaning than the actual meaning of the Greek words that were used.

### At Worship in the Assembly (or Everywhere)

Where are the head covering instructions for both men and women to be followed?

Do these commands only apply in worship when we assemble?

The answer is found in the scriptures, but we need to read carefully for the details.

First, we should look back in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians to see what was under discussion in the earlier chapters *for . . . ?*

That’s right, the context!

As 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 10 closes the letter is addressing everyday living, not what we often refer to as worship services.

“If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake.”  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:27 NKJV

Eating dinner at the house of another is not the assembly.

Dinner at the home of a non-believer, who may be eating meat offered to an idol is a tell-tell sign that it is a secular activity. Just like us, the Christians in Corinth had friends and family who had not accepted Jesus as Lord and Master.

Seemingly some of the Corinthians were worried about unknowingly eating meat that might have been offered to idols. Paul tells the Corinthians to eat whatever they serve at the dinner without asking any questions about it.

Going to dinner at the home of an unbeliever is undeniably outside the context of corporal worship in the assembly.

Some try to suggest 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:14-22 is about the Lord’s Supper arguing Paul is discussing worship practices before Chapter 11 begins with head covering. This is not the

case. The Lord's Supper is not under consideration in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:27 unless the Lord's Supper was being undertaken in the home of an unbeliever.

Therefore, the context at the conclusion of Chapter 10 is outside the assembly.

At the start of Chapter 11, praise is given for keeping the head covering traditions (apostolic commands) that had previously been delivered to them.

There is no indication that Paul has made a transition from normal daily life to worship when the congregation assembled *as Chapter 11 begins*.

Therefore, absent some change in the context, the logical conclusion is that the conversation has not shifted to corporate worship or activities undertaken while in the assembly. This alone is a good indication, but not conclusive. Let's see if we can find any other evidence to help decide the context.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17 Paul seems to change the topic to matters in the assembly by using words about when they come together.

“Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you. . .” letting the reader know that he is going to a new subject. Verse 17

Paul then says, “. . . since you come together not for the better but for the worse.” The words “come together” imply when the congregation meets as the assembly, but it isn't really completely clear.

What is certain by the end of verse 17 (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17) is that Paul is moving to a new subject and gone from praise to criticism.

Verse 18 confirms that what appears to be the context of the assembly at the end of verse 17 is in fact the new subject under review. “For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that. . . .”

The words “as a church” are conclusive that the criticism Paul is about to make involves a matter of formal group worship.

Therefore, by the signaling that Paul is changing from head covering to partaking of the Lord's Supper in the assembly, the obvious conclusion is the first half of Chapter 11 was praying or prophesying anywhere, any place, or anytime. Otherwise, Paul would have changed the context at the beginning of Chapter 11.

By the time we get to verses 20-22, undeniably the harsh criticism for improperly taking the Lord's Supper is about improper corporate worship.

“Therefore when you come together in one place, It is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? . . . .” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:20-22 (last portion of verse 22 omitted)

The head covering instructions in the initial part of Chapter 11 are right between every day life at the end of Chapter 10 and worship in assembly in the second half of Chapter 11.

This adds more force to the conclusion that the covering rules are applicable in any setting.

The inference that prayer or prophesy only occurred during in the assembly or collective worship is contrary to other scriptures.

Prayer can be offered outside the assembly or inside.

Prayer can be offered silently while alone or prayer can be offered by a collective group with one person praying out loud while the others assent.

But, that's not the only reason we know 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 is not (merely) about a church assembly.

I have not overlooked that verse 5 shows the women were praying and prophesying. How do we reconcile the location where the women were engaged in praying and prophesying?

How do we know this was not in the assembly or collective worship?

If we proceed forward to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul says the women are too keep silent in the churches.

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35 NKJV (Underling added)

If the praying and prophesy under consideration in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5 was during worship

in the assembly, then Paul is engaged in double talk. In Chapter 11, he would be telling the women to speak in worship when veiled. Then in Chapter 14, he would be saying the women should remain silent.

Paul is not giving *inconsistent* commands as an inspired writer.

The instruction for silence by women in the assembly poses no inconsistency **if** the first half of Chapter 11 applies to any venue, i.e., in the assembly or elsewhere.

The logical resolution of the two competing passages is that one includes activities outside the assembly, i.e., the women were praying and/or prophesying at home and/or places other than the assembly. The other requiring a woman to be silent occurs when the church is assembled.

Long story made short - women are to keep silent in church.

Therefore, the logical resolution is that the head covering instructions for praying and prophesying in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:4-5 apply in every place or venue.

In Acts, we are told about women prophesying.

“On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.” Acts 21:8-10 NKJV (Underline added)

The text identifies they were in the house of Philip. Acts 21:8

There is no indication these daughters prophesied in the assembled church.

An appropriate inference is the daughters did not violate the prohibition of women speaking when the church assembled. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35

Albeit a deduction, it is fair to surmise the daughters’ prophesying was in accord with the women keeping silent in the church.

At the end of the day, the only reasonable conclusion in my judgment is the head covering commands apply at any time and in every place.

[Interestingly, most known denominations taught that men should remove their hats and

caps in prayer at ball games, rodeos, etc. The head covering principles were practiced by men outside of the assembly. But this too seems to be changing with our progressive culture in the church.]

### Liberal “Christians” Claim Non-Covering Brethren Are Hypocrites

Churches seem to be moving away from gender roles as the commands of God to these roles being merely cultural ways, i.e., they can be ignored.

In particular, the practice of women becoming preachers, women pastors, and female evangelists has become accepted by a growing number of churches and denominations around the world.

In contending that women can teach adult Bible classes (with men present), preach from the pulpit, and become elders in the church, *they point out that head covering is treated as simply a cultural practice.*

Therefore, they argue the reading of passages such as 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-14 must also be interpreted using the cultural lens. Otherwise, using two different hermeneutics (Bible interpretations) is hypocritical.

This is a fair criticism.

If we read one part of the Bible with one rule of interpretation, then use another rule for a different passage - the inconsistency - is disingenuous regardless of who does it.

Here is 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-14, one of the scriptures that I rely upon for my position that women have a different teaching role in the church from men.

“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. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-14NKJV

As you see, Paul says that a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man, but to learn in silence. The reason that he gives is that at the time of creation, Adam was formed first. He goes on that Eve was deceived while Adam was not.

*Satan knows the scriptures better than we do* - he knows how to use our error in one part of the scriptures to launch an attack from another part of the Bible. In short, he attacks the

credibility of those who teach against female leadership in the church, but that suggest head covering was simply a cultural convention for that time.

The criticism is that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 11 also goes back to creation. If the creation account is not significant in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, then it should not be in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy.

In order to have credibility, then we must apply the rules of Bible interpretation in a consistent manner.

We all understand that do as I say, not as I do - *results in the loss of credibility*.

If 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-14 (that according to the text is founded in creation) is binding, then how do we explain the head covering directive to a woman also founded in creation is not binding?

I agree with the liberal “Christians” in one respect.

If 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-14 is binding based upon the link to creation, then it is hypocritical to say that 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 doesn’t matter.

A faithful Christian confronted with the violation of the scriptures makes any change necessary to repent.

In contrast, a hypocrite pretends to obey God and pretends to follow the Bible while continuing to do what he or she wants.

I will gladly consider any logical analysis or explanation that can reconcile these contradictions. But I cannot currently understand how this inconsistency is not a hypocritical interpretation of the Bible.

Going back to Satan’s methods and how he has deceived Christians, what did he do?

First, he attacked the head covering as insignificant and unimportant. Just like in the Garden of Eden, he asked, “did God really say . . . for women to cover their heads”?

“Surely God didn’t mean wearing or not wearing a covering makes any difference. How could it matter”?

Satan has almost universally destroyed the doctrine of head covering across the church as a whole.

Now he has turned to eliminating the gender roles that God has put in place in both the home and the church.

Satan says women are equal to men. This is a half-truth.

Women have equal value in the eyes of God. But women were given a lower rank than men.

Satan then finishes with the lie that this equality means a woman is able to perform any role of a man.

Just like in the Garden, he fills people full of half-truths combined with outright lies.

Those who proclaim female rights in the home and the church tell the world we are hypocrites by picking and choosing the parts of the Bible that we want to apply while discarding the parts that we don't like.

Whether those who now teach that women can occupy the roles God designated for men are innocently deceived (or false teachers that have crept into the church) *involves the heart of each person* - we cannot judge the hearts of others - **only their fruits**.

The fruits suggest a refusal to obey God's commands about the role of women.

For those who proclaim male leadership in the home and the church (but not head covering), the fruits demonstrate an inconsistency in interpreting the scriptures.

The need for repentance for the failure in women to wear a covering is glaring us in the face. We should preach and teach with consistent rules of interpretation.

### Is This a Matter of Salvation?

Is head covering a question of salvation?

It is always a little annoying to have someone answer your question by asking you a question. Oh well, I am going to do it anyway!

Does it really matter if head covering is (or is not) a matter of salvation?

If God or Jesus were to come to you stating, "I have a request of you. I am not going to command you to do it, but I would be truly pleased if you would observe the instructions

for proper head covering when you pray.”

What would be your answer?

Would you tell Jesus, who died for you, that you prefer not to keep the head covering instructions?

The more concerning question may be: “Is God going to send people to hell for eternity if they have been deceived by the evil one or false teachers”?

Paul condemned the abuses of the Lord’s Supper in the same chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. Will taking part in the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner result in eternal fire if the person was bamboozled?

Duped?

What about those little sins of gossip and telling white lies to avoid hurting the feelings of someone dear to you? Will unrepentant gossip and lying really send a person to hell?

Will not being baptized keep you out of the pearly gates *if someone has deceived you into believing that repeating the sinner’s prayer is all that is necessary?*

I recognize that I have only asked a bunch of questions, rather than giving an answer.

Let’s try this approach, make a list of every command in the Bible that you can ignore.

Jesus says if you love Me, then you will keep My commandments. So take a few minutes and write down all the commands that you can refuse to keep with love for Him.

When we see a command that we are not willing to obey, the conclusion is that we don’t love Jesus (or don’t love Him enough).

Well, how much do we have to love Him?

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” Matthew 10:37-39 NKJV

Is it easier for a Muslim who loses his family by accepting Christ or a Christian to comply



with the directives for appropriate head covering?

If you (like me), have *felt comfortable* essentially ignoring the head covering commands your entire life, it is pretty easy to relegate head covering to being something *unimportant*.

For those who may be looking for an excuse (not to make a change in life), then here's some more excuses to consider:

- My mom didn't wear one. She was a wonderful and loving Christian!
- I'm following the Bible and doing what our family has always done!
- At my church " *we don't practice covering and we have the truth!*"

Coming to grips with maybe, (just maybe), *I haven't had the truth* (at least on this one topic) is a bitter pill to swallow.

None of us like having to admit that we were wrong!

I know from personal experience, the worst part about being wrong *is having to admit it!*

I keep coming back to the big picture that we see in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

The church had a lot of major problems that Paul is trying to correct. So why would he (through his letter inspired by the Holy Spirit) give multiple reasons for the proper head covering for men and women in the midst of all these serious problems . . . . unless the head covering directives carry a similar weight.

Why would Paul take away from the "serious problems" to talk about some minor point that doesn't matter anyway - if after all the woman's hair is her covering?

Sorry, but the perspective that a woman wearing a head covering is a minor matter (even trivial) does not fit the context of the letter as a whole.

Again, context, context, context.

If Paul is writing about serious concerns, the insertion of a meaningless discussion right in the middle of the letter is an abrupt departure from the context.

Paul giving multiple reasons for head covering, then concluding that none of those reasons really matter because the woman already has hair (or any other justification) simply defies reason.

The scriptures including 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:1-16 are there because Paul was inspired to write them. He placed the directives immediately before his criticism of the abuses of the Lord's Supper.

There seems to be a serious danger in selecting verses like baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other passages with symbolic meaning *that we want to apply* while relegating an equally similar symbol of head covering as meaningless.

If being immersed in water and eating a small piece of unleavened bread and juice are necessary (some argue these are not), then the wholesale avoidance of another symbolic gesture would seem to carry a similar penalty.

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20 -21 "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, *avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.*" (Italics and underling added) NKJV

Judge for yourself whether it is a matter of salvation - we will all give an answer for what we have done in the flesh.

Jesus said whoever does not hate his own life and his own family cannot be his disciple. Luke 14:25-35 We must forsake all things to be a true follower.

Jesus concludes with He who has ears, let him hear!

We all have ears, *the question is, are we listening?*

### Submission to God From the Heart

The question becomes, what should you do?

As a man or a woman will you submit to God regarding the head covering that He has instituted?

The key is your heart.

When a man removes his hat for prayer (or removes his hat before he steps inside the church building), he communicates a message to everyone who sees him.

The message is that the man honors Christ. The gesture is symbolic in nature. But, it clearly communicates the willingness of the man to humble himself by the act of taking

off his hat. He through his heart is showing his honor to God by his actions.

Another man may remove his hat due to peer pressure, societal influence, or just because.

The second man may be firmly convicted in his mind that he rejects Christ and wants nothing to do with Him, though he takes off his hat. This man, *though his hat be removed*, dishonors Christ by his rebellious refusal to accept Jesus as both his Savior and his Head.

In much the same way, the woman who covers her head for the wrong motive, appears remarkably like the second man who took off his hat for the wrong reason.

She may have a covering over her head and hair, but in my opinion she is no more honoring Christ than the second man. If she has not determined in her own heart to wear a covering because it demonstrates her willingness to humble herself, then the gesture is not acceptable to God.

By its very definition, “submission” is a heart-felt decision or choice to comply.

No amount of compulsion will result in true and genuine “submission” as “submission” comes from an internal decision to voluntarily yield.

The man or woman must decide if he/she is willing to humble himself/herself.

No man can force a humble heart upon another. Each person must individually decide between pride and humility. Even our Creator does not compel a humble heart. He allows us to decide if we want to surrender our pride and self-importance in proper reverence for Him.

Christian men, both husbands as the head of the wives and the male leadership of the eldership, have a definite responsibility to teach the whole counsel of God to the female gender. No buts, no excuses. This includes teaching the need for the woman to cover herself in prayer (and when she is teaching children and other females).

The question of whether a husband should compel his wife to wear a head covering during prayer and prophesy is beyond the scope of this book. Some suggest this should occur and argue that over time the practice will become heart-felt. Others disagree and contend that involuntary compliance will not be satisfactory to God, the Father.

Undoubtedly fathers have a duty to teach their daughters proper head covering and to train up their daughters in God’s ways. This may start an early age when young boys are taught

to remove their caps by compulsion if necessary and young girls being required to wear a covering during prayer and to worship services.

This may pose family disagreement and significant strife if the mother (or other family) voice disapproval. The man will have to choose if he loves God more than any other. All decisions concerning the daughters should be made in sincere prayer for guidance from above.

### Correlation Between Women Who Cover and the Divorce Rate

Purely anecdotal (with the full disclosure that correlation does not equal causation):

- as the use of coverings began to cease, the rates for divorce went up.

(Full disclosure these facts have not been independently verified by me and the source):  
<https://www.biblicalresearchreports.com/the-effects-of-the-headcovering-on-divorce/>

### Topics Outside the Scope of this Paper

I recognize there are many other questions that can arise not covered in this little book. A few of these include:

- what if the husband instructs the wife not to wear a covering?
- should a husband force his wife to wear a head covering?
- should the eldership require the congregation to comply with the covering rules as part of the oversight entrusted to the elders?
- what is meant by the angels and what angels, the good angels or the fallen angels?
- is there an ongoing and continuing spiritual battle playing out with angels at risk of falling?
- if the spiritual battle continues, then can the refusal of men/women to comply with the covering instructions tempt the angels?
- the modesty argument for wearing (or not wearing) a veil.
- Paul limiting the matter to only prayer in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:13 whereas in verse 5 he addressed prayer and prophesying.
- a detailed explanation for why a covering is required when older women are teaching or praying with younger women with no men present.
- a detailed examination for why a woman teaching a children's class needs to wear a covering.
- is prophesying the equivalent of teaching for purposes of having proper headdress?

Maybe with time and study these specific questions can be addressed in the future. However, if you decide to accept that head covering applies today as gender based instructions, then you can probably answer several of these subjects on your own.

### Conclusion

The culture today is filled with gender chaos.

A Justice seeking to serve on our United States Supreme Court can't define what a woman is.

Young boys are being encouraged to believe they can become women and likewise our young girls are convinced they can transform into men.

Society encourages divorce, multiple marriages, same-sex marriage, and place remarkable emphasis on living life outside of the boundaries God has set.

Have we left right path and if so, where did we first go wrong?

I would argue that refusing to demonstrate reverence for God in prayer, worship, and with our teaching was the first step that has brought us to the point we are.

The first step away from proper head covering when engaged in the spiritual realm was dishonor to God.

We weren't listening to Him.

The slippery slope downward is near maximum speed. If we continue, then total depravity will be upon us.

There seems to be no one who argues that a woman wearing a covering during worship and prayer is sinning. Thus, the practice of a woman covering her head with an artificial covering appears to be a safe practice.

Paul gave praise to the men and women in Corinth for remembering him in all things and that they were keeping the traditions for head covering just as Paul delivered them. This praise is given in the face of many other sharp criticisms of the church throughout the letter.

He goes all the way back to creation for the explanation for why head covering for a

woman is important.

Paul explains the need for the woman to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels, although no one understands the exact significance of angels being involved. Nonetheless, the amount of proverbial ink given to the covering commands combined with the theological elements strongly suggests the issue is far more consequential than “modern Christian culture” treats the instructions.

Church history points to a universal tradition of men not being covered (and women wearing an artificial covering) for over 2,000 years with the early church fathers contending the woman’s hair was insufficient.

The previous 100 years shows a marked shift in society in male/female roles; thus, moving away from the traditional belief that the man is the head of the wife. Today a significant portion of the population rejects male headship and calls for equality in rank in marriage. These also call for equity in church leadership arguing women are qualified to lead.

The Bible uses symbols so that believers can demonstrate or show faith, trust in God, and manifest obedience to God.

Humility and submission are prominent themes running through the Old and New Testaments with God demanding that there be repentance from pride and arrogance.

God requires yielding submission to Christ with surrender in every aspect of life.

Like with the simplicity of baptism, (compliance with men not wearing a covering while women wear a covering) poses no physical challenge or difficult barrier to overcome. The only seeming difficult obstacle is the willingness to set aside pride and humbly accept what Paul teaches.

Paul’s final admonition of the topic is not to be contentious. The warning is given to those who would oppose the practice of a woman wearing a covering over her hair (and the practice of a man removing his hat or covering before praying or engaging in worship).

Thank you for hearing my thoughts and I pray that God grant the wisdom to truly discern His ways for us, the courage to obey His will, and the strength to repent of all sins, and His grace to forgive the mistakes that have already been made.

God Bless!

