

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

12 For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

This Timely Bible Study is provided by friends of Paul O. Nichols.
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In 1 Corinthians chapter 11:1-16 the subject under consideration is **headship**. There is nothing hard to understand about the plain statements of Paul as to God's divine arrangement. It is some of the things he says in connection with the subject that creates problems for some people.

In verse one the apostle encourages all Christians at Corinth, both men and women, to follow his example as he followed Christ. In verse 2 he teaches them to keep the ordinances or commandments of God as he had taught them. Submission to the will of Christ is of utmost importance, and all need to learn that. "He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

In verse 3 the writer makes a statement of fact. He emphasizes what he is about to say, by declaring, "**But I would have you know...**" What he is about to say to them, he wants them to understand is important. Now he gives the divine arrangement of authority. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." No one in the world can change this. Times and customs may change, but these facts can never change, whether we like it or not. No man or group of men have the authority to change anything God has said. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

In verse four Paul makes another statement of fact. "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered dishonoureth his head." The head that man can cover is his own natural head, but in so doing he dishonors his spiritual head, that is, Christ. No one can

expression, "they had hair as the hair of women." In submission to the will of God, if Christian men and women do as the apostle Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11 there will be no doubt about their sincerity. But "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23).

For the person who is looking for a way to get around what Paul teaches in the preceding verses there is no refuge nor "loop hole" to be found in 1 Corinthians 11:16. The apostle does not contradict himself nor teach that if a person is contentious and refuses to accept what is taught by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that it is all right. Nor does he claim it is of no value because the church of Christ does not teach nor practice these things. What the church did not do was practice nor sanction the things that he taught were wrong. It does not make any difference if a person is contentious. Rebellion does not change the teaching of the word of God.

The desire of every faithful child of God should be to please our Father in heaven. Jesus said, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). If we want God to be with us, we had better try to understand His will and do the things that please Him. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3:6).

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we answer, “No, it is not comely that a woman pray to God uncovered. It is a shame.”

In verse fourteen the question is asked, “Doth not even nature itself teach you?...” We can learn some things just by observing nature. In this case what does nature teach us? Even nature teaches us “that if a man have long hair, it is shame unto him.” Long hair on a man is not natural; It is shameful. Besides what the word of God teaches, even nature itself teaches that a long haired man is a freak of nature.

In verse fifteen the writer gives a contrast between the man and the woman. He says, “But if a woman have **long hair**, it is a glory to her.” What is a shame to a man is a glory to a woman. Why? The reason Paul gives is, “**for her hair is given her for a covering.**” Now we know what the covering is. Instead of an artificial veil, the Lord has given woman a natural covering — hair. How can one who is honest deny this. But in the eyes of God is hair all it takes for her to claim to be covered? If so, then just so she does not shave her head or shear her hair all off, she would be scripturally covered. No, the word of God says her covering is long hair from the Greek word “komao”. This word means “Let the hair **grow long.**” One does not let the hair grow long when he or she is constantly cutting it off. One cuts his or her hair to keep it from growing long. That is the purpose of cutting the hair.

In Eze. 16:9 God speaks to His wife (Israel) and tells her her hair is “grown”. If a woman lets her hair grow long, it becomes “grown hair”. In Rev. 9:8 there is an

alter this fact. What he is writing about has spiritual significance. Why is this the case? Because when a man prays or teaches, he does so through Christ the mediator and by His authority (1 Tim.2:5; Col. 3:17). He says, “No man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). But the man by the covering of his head signifies that is he circumventing Christ and going directly to the Father. By his action he dishonors or disgraces Christ his spiritual head and mediator.

In verse five the inspired writer says, “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.” It is just the opposite for the woman as it is for the man. The woman **must have her head covered** when she teaches God’s word (wherever she is scripturally permitted to do so) and she **must have her head covered whenever** and wherever she prays to God. These are statements of fact. Praying with her natural head covered signifies she is not praying through her spiritual head (man), but is praying through Christ, and her teaching is done in the name of Christ. It makes no difference what the customs of the day happen to be, or if times do change, God has not changed His mind nor His word. Man must pray with his **head uncovered** and the woman must pray with her **head covered**. Otherwise they dishonor their spiritual heads and disparage the divine arrangement of headship set up by God. The teaching of Paul must be understood within the context of his inspired writing.

Up to this point the apostle Paul has stated certain facts, and he shows what an important roll the covering plays when it comes to our teaching the word of God or

when we approach God in prayer. But he has not told us what the covering is. However, in the latter part of verse five he gives us some hint of a connection between the covering and hair. He says that if the woman does not have the covering when she prays or teaches “that is even all one as if she were shaven”. In other words, if she is not going to do the Lord’s will and have the covering, the woman might just as well shave her head. It is the same thing.

In verse six Paul states it another way to emphasize the importance of the woman’s covering. He says, “For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn.” Shorn, according to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, is, “a shearing, or cutting short, the hair of the head.” So whatever the covering is, if the woman does not have it when she prays or teaches someone the word of God, she might just as well shear her head. But then the writer reasons like this: “But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.” Visualize a Christian woman (perhaps your wife or mother or sister) with her head shaved or sheared like a sheep. Yes, it would be a shame. Then “let her be covered.”

In verse seven Paul says, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.” Whatever the covering is, Paul says the man ought not to have it. And the reason he gives is “he is the image and glory of God.” Man was made in the image of God and for His glory (Gen. 9:6). And God decrees that when a man prays or teaches His word that his head must not be covered because of these facts. No man can change this.

In contrast with what he said about the man the apostle Paul says, “But the woman is the glory of the man.” Then in verse eight he continues, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” Which refers to the fact that man was first created and the woman was made from the rib of the man (Gen: 2:21-23). Then he says in verse nine, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.” This indicates why man was made head over the woman and she is his help meet (Gen. 2: 20).

Verse ten indicates, according to the will of God, that the woman, by having the covering the Lord requires, gives sign to the angels in heaven that she respects God’s arrangements and man’s headship.

In verses eleven and twelve we are informed that this teaching applies to all men and women who are Christians, whether married or unmarried, because it is of universal application. All women originated with the miracle in the garden when God formed Eve from the rib of Adam, and every man that has ever been born came as a result of a woman giving him life. The apostle takes from us any excuse for our not applying this teaching to ourselves.

In verse thirteen in the light of his teaching Paul encourages his readers to do a little thinking on their own. He says, “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? The word “comely” means “fit, becoming, seemly”. Of course, in view of his teaching in the preceding verses, honesty demands that

**THE TEACHING OF
PAUL IN
1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16**

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