

Should Christian Women Veil?

(A Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

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It happened in the city of Detroit, Michigan. After applying for a marriage license, a man failed to reappear at the county clerk's office until 11 years later to claim the important document. When asked why he and his fiancée had waited so long to get married, he explained, "We had a few disagreements about details." Well, there are many today who disagree with male headship and submission but in doing so they are disagreeing with God. This is what we want to study about in the passage of 1 Corinthians chapter eleven.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16 has some features that make it one of the most difficult and controversial passages in the Bible. For instance, what does the word "head" mean in verse three and how do we correlate women praying and prophesying in verse 5 with the command for silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35? Furthermore, in verse seven we need to decipher in what sense the woman is the glory of a man. In verse ten we need to find out what Paul meant when conveying the thought of a woman having a sign of authority on her head. And what did Paul mean when he spoke about the angels? What does the word nature mean in verse 14? And finally, the whole concept of women veiling within a cultural expression and how it relates to the western church today is also a challenging issue. These are some of the things we need to discuss in this study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.

Here is a summary of what we find in 1 Corinthians chapter eleven. Paul moves from God's creative plan of male leadership and female submission within the home, church, and society (1 Cor. 11:1-3 - a creative and functional order in the roles of the sexes) to male and female customs which reflect the original order of creation (1 Cor. 3: 4-13 - the artificial veil). He then moves to the natural order of things (1 Cor. 11:14-16 - hair lengths on women and men) which also reflect the original and unchanging order God established in creation (headship and male leadership over women in home, church, society). He argues that a woman's natural hair and coverage over

her head is given to her “instead of” or “in place of” an artificial and customary veil.

Creation’s order is pictured by the unchanging signs of Biblical womanhood and manhood which is longer hair on women and shorter hair on men. Long hair maintains a woman’s femininity and short hair a man’s masculinity which is also a reflection of creation’s established order of male leadership and the submission of women.

The femininity (not feminism) of longer hair on women and shorter hair on men is a reflection of the distinct roles that God originally created for the man and woman. In other words, the signs or marks of femininity and manhood (proper hair lengths) are a direct reflection of the way God designed male leadership and submission. Paul states that “nature” (a natural instinct given to us by God – an innate knowledge and sense given to us by God’s creative act) confirms this in our hearts. In the end, there is no custom of arguing or disputing with what Paul and the apostles taught regarding creation, custom, and also the constant and confirming signs of femininity and manhood (hair lengths) which reflect God’s original order of creation.

We must be careful that we do not drown out or become insensitive to the natural God-given instincts in our hearts regarding Biblical manhood and womanhood. Instead of following culture which often contradicts God’s truth regarding the roles of creation and the unchanging signs of these roles (proper hair lengths on woman and men) for marriage, church, and society in general, we must follow what the Bible says which is before us and nature teaches us inside of us.

We will begin our outline and attempt to do proper exegesis of this important passage and discover that the central thrust of the passage is clear on the matter of male headship and female submission.

1. The clear teaching – 1-3

In the first three verses Paul is going to set forth the clear teaching on headship and submission. Under this point we want to discuss Paul’s credentials for teaching headship and the actual meaning of the word

“head” as it appears in the Bible and assign to this metaphor the intended meaning of Scripture.

The Authority for the Teaching

1 Corinthians 11:1-2

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you.”

a. Paul was a follower of Christ (vs. 1).

Paul begins by saying that he has full authority to speak on this topic since he was a follower of the words and works of Jesus Christ. Verse one links the last section on Christian liberty to this present section on the teaching of women. First, the Corinthians were to follow Paul’s example of love and his willingness to limit their liberty so they might not offend fellow believers (10:23-33). This is what Christ would do and Paul claimed to be following Christ. At the same time, they were to follow Paul’s instructional teaching regarding women in the local church since he was following Christ’s teachings. Paul was a follower of Christ’s teachings and because of this what he was about to say was true.

It’s interesting that Paul praised the Corinthians (“I praise you”) in verse two and used this expression as a way to provide a complimentary introduction to them as fellow brethren. Instead of jumping right into their abuses regarding the traditional teaching of Scripture he wanted to encourage them by reminding them that they were fellow brethren and not every situation in the local church was bleak and dismal. Furthermore, the believers who wrote Paul (7:1) apparently had asked for his word on the submission of women in the local assemblies. The apostle was pleased that they sought God’s revelation on this matter and others matters and praised them for their desire to know the truth. But immediately after the praise he talks to them about the importance of affirming the truth about headship (verse 3) and it’s this subject that we must now consider. Paul was not going to praise them for all that they did (“I praise you not” – vs. 17 and “shall I praise you in this” – vs. 22).

b. Paul was a follower of God's Word (vs. 2).

The word for "ordinances" (paradosis) means "that which is passed along by teaching." It refers to the traditional teaching of Paul who was speaking the truth of God's Word to the people. In short, this expression is a synonym for God's Word. Paul says that the Corinthians were to "keep the ordinances" which means they were to observe the oral transmissions of Scripture that have been passed down to the local church at Corinth. They were not to waiver from the truth of the apostolic traditions and inspired instructions or commands of Paul (1 Cor. 11:23; 15: 1, 3). This reminds us that we should never attempt to change and rearrange what the Bible says but tenaciously hold to the truth of the Biblical traditions (2 Thess. 2:15) as they were originally delivered by the apostles (2 Peter 1:21). The Corinthians were not following the traditions regarding women in the church (11:3-16), the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), and spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40). They had departed from truth and practice in these areas of truth.

We live in a day when people want to express their views of Scripture instead of doing proper exegesis and discovering what the Bible actually says. We live in a day of relevance and lack of commitment to any absolute standard. We live in a time when truth is being sidelined and error is being promoted instead of absolute standards of right and wrong. Dear friend, we must "keep the ordinances" today or hold fast to truth (Rev. 2:25; 3:11). We must stick to the teaching that has been passed on to us by God's men who were privileged to record God's Word in the pages of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16). The traditions of men should be avoided (Matt. 15:2-3; Col. 2:8), but the traditions that are given in the Word of God must be observed. Whenever we try to place our own biased view on Scripture we demonstrate our lack of concern for the inspiration of God's Word and the standard of absolute truth. Many today have a low view of Scripture. For this reason they contend that these verses reflect Paul's prejudice against women, since he was a bachelor!

The Meaning of the Teaching

1 Corinthians 11:3

“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.”

One concept that is viciously attacked by the feminist movement of today is the meaning of the word “head” (kephale) as it appears in the Bible. With this in mind I want to do a study of 1 Corinthians chapter eleven so we can have a thorough understanding of what Paul is teaching concerning headship. We will outline this chapter and study the Genesis arrangement that Paul uses for male authority when using the word head. The feminist interpreters of Scripture attempt to assign a different meaning to the word “head” than the Scriptures do. It’s falsely reasoned that the metaphor (“head”) connotes that man was only the source or origin of the woman’s existence but not her leader and authoritative figure. The truth of the matter is this. The woman did originate from the man (1 Cor. 11:8). We discussed this in an above point. Man was the source or origin of a woman’s existence (Gen. 2:20-23) but Paul does not use the term “head” to mean source or origin in any context of Scripture. He uses this term “head” to express and teach male authority over women and female submission to this authority.

Actually, the argument that man was a woman’s source or origin is enough proof to demonstrate that man is to be her authority figure. Paul adds this argument in 1 Corinthians 11:8 as additional proof to convey that a man is a woman’s head (authority and leader). This verse (1 Cor. 11:8) does not explain what the term “head” means but gives further evidence to prove that a woman must submit to her head or authority which is her husband. So the Scriptural understanding that a man is the source of the woman’s existence actually argues against the feminist position. In this passage (1 Cor. 11:3) Paul is saying that a man is a woman’s head (leader and authority) and to add further proof of his authority over the woman he gives the illustration that a man is the woman’s source.

It’s interesting that Wayne Grudem did extensive research of the word “head.” His findings consisted of 2,336 references where the term head was found. The sources where the word was found

included the Scriptures, classical writings, and early first century A.D. Greek literature, and every source indicated that the word “head” never carried the meaning of “source” or “origin” in Bible times. Instead, it carried the meaning of leader and ruler. The linguistic studies simply do not prove that the word “head” means source or origin. The linguistic analysis supports the meaning of “head” as leader or ruler as well as the Biblical context where this term occurs. For instance, Ephesians 1:22 says, “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church.” The word “head” is clearly a metaphor that occurs in a context dealing with Christ’s authority “over all things.” Colossians 2:10, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” This clearly implies that Christ is the only leader and authority figure (head) over all other authority in the universe. In the context where “the church is subject unto Christ” (Eph. 5:24) Christ is said to “the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23) which indicates that the word head once again implies authority.

Other verses could be mentioned but these give us a clear understanding of the Bible’s use of the word “head.” The metaphor for “head” always means leader and authority. It does not mean “exalted originator and completer” as some suggest. All the Greek lexicons that specialize in the New Testament period list the meaning of the term “head” to mean “ruler, leader, or authority over.” The evidence is indisputable. It is true that through the head we are nourished because we take in food through the mouth. This would speak of nourishment and growth (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19). But this does not change the primary meaning of the metaphor, which points to authority. It is only a secondary application and means that the One in authority (Christ) also lovingly supplies our spiritual needs as any good leader would do (Eph. 5:23-24, 28).

Ray Stedman summarizes the meaning of the word head in this way: “Now when *head* is used metaphorically, figuratively, as it is here, it refers to priority in function. That is what the head of our body does; it runs the body; it is in charge; it is the direction setter of the body. Used metaphorically, therefore, the word *head* means primarily leadership, and thus it is used in this passage.”

The word “head” refers to the ruling and sovereign part of the body. The head coordinates the rest of the human body and without the head there would be no more direction and leadership for the body. Thus, the very illustration that Jesus uses of a human head points to leadership and authority. Only a feminist with an axe to grind can miss the natural meaning and intended understanding of this term. Many want to substitute the word “source” for the word “head” and give it a different meaning. However, if one would substitute the word “source” for the “word” head in verse three the text would fail to make sense. Furthermore, it would create unorthodox teaching since the source of Christ is not the Father. Christ did not come into existence through the Father’s life but eternally existed with the Father in eternity past (Col. 1:15-17).

It would be a serious theological blunder to make the Father the source of Christ’s existence, as the woman was the source of man’s existence. However, it would be theologically correct to say that the Father was the functional head of Christ and that Christ was submissive to the Father’s will. This is what Paul is saying and teaching by this passage. The head of Jesus Christ (God the Son) is the Father (God the Father) and Jesus as the Son makes Himself willingly submissive to his functional head – the Father. Therefore, just as Christ is submissive to His head (God the Father) and to His authority and leadership over Him, so the wife is to be submissive to her head (the husband) and to his leadership and authority over her. This truth is not cultural or chauvinistic but is the stated ordinance of God.

So this passage in 1 Corinthians teaches the principle of headship (leadership, rulership, authority). Paul does not change the meaning or understanding of the word “head” in any of his New Testament writings. So when we come to the section of Scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter eleven we must once again see the term “head” as referring to leadership and authority.

The Content of the Teaching (vs. 3).

One of the Scriptural ordinances that Paul is passing down to us is authority and submission. Paul says that there are three great relationships involving authority and subjection. It is a three-fold

authority that God's people must accept in relationship to their church worship services and activities. Verse three is the cornerstone to everything else that Paul says in this chapter. If you miss verse three, you miss everything. It is the foundational base upon which everything else is built. In these verses Paul is establishing the unchanging principle and then goes on to apply it.

a. Christ has authority over the man.

This means that the man should surrender to Christ's authority and follow His teachings even as Paul exemplified or illustrated by his life (vs. 1). Jesus requires discipleship. This means that every man is to submit to the teachings of Jesus Christ and follow Him (Luke 9:23). We must ask ourselves if we have faced this matter of authority in our lives? Have we ever reached the point where we recognize it is God's divine pattern for Jesus Christ to run our lives? A man is not a man until he has been mastered by Jesus Christ. The headship of Christ over the man is important in light of the functioning of the marriage relationship. Why? Because when a man is under Christ's authority he will not live like a tyrant over his wife. He will be a follower of Christ's example and live like Jesus Christ showing sympathy and sacrificial love toward his wife (Eph. 5:25). The headship of Jesus Christ over the man is very important in relationship to a proper functioning marriage. If man is not a follower of the works, words, and ways of Jesus Christ then nothing will function properly in the marriage relationship.

b. Man has authority over the woman.

The place of headship was given to the man, and the woman is under his authority. He is to lead and direct the woman and the woman is to be man's helper and in subordination to his authority. This was God's design from creation (Gen. 2:18-23), as Paul will verify in this portion of Scripture (1 Cor. 11: 8-10), and as he does in others (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5). The Bible explains what authority means. Since man has authority over the woman he has the right (Matt. 8:9) and power (Mark 1:27; 1 Cor. 7:37) and responsibility (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10) to give proper direction to his wife.

c. The Father has authority over Christ

Even though there is equality in the Godhead (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 1:8; Acts 5:3-4) there is also functional submission. The same is true in the marriage relationship. There is equality and yet functional headship and submission. Some Corinthians may have concluded that the headship of a man over a woman diminished the woman's worth and value to God. Paul anticipates this objection and adds that God the Father is the head over Jesus Christ. Even in the Godhead, One Person has the place of authority and Another takes the place of willing subordination or submission (Phil. 2:7; Luke 22:42; John 4:34). These examples of headship and submission were designed by God Himself and are fundamental in His arrangement of the universe. They cannot be undone without theological, ecclesiastical, and societal damage.

Now please understand that this is not a chain of command type of structure that gives the idea that the wife can only relate to God through her husband rather than directly to God herself. This reasoning is certainly false. Every woman is able to relate directly to God through Christ, not simply through her husband (Gal. 3:28; Heb. 4:16). She too is under Christ's authority in the spiritual realm and can fellowship and walk with God without going through the man. What Paul is teaching is God's order of *functional* authority within the Godhead, church, and society. This is not God's chain of authority but is God's order of authority and it's this authority that should manifest itself in the life of church ministry, as we will see from this text of Scripture. God brings us back to the basics! God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:40) and the functional order He has established for the home, church, and society in general is the way God wants it to be. Paul is saying, "This is the way things are. This is the way God has made them. These are the Maker's instructions."

The Reason for the Teaching

Why is Paul bringing to the forefront the whole matter of male headship? Why did Paul need to present this truth about male headship (authority) and female submission to this authority? Apparently some of the women were acting disorderly within the stated public church gatherings or meetings. This is one of the

reasons why Paul concludes this section by saying “that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse” (vs. 17). Paul was dealing with worship issues revolving around women, the Lord’s Supper, and the use and abuse of spiritual gifts in the context of worship, ministry, and church life. This would be covered in the following chapters. One thing is for sure. Paul had women problems going on in the church and the same is true today in the modern church.

There are two reasons for the teaching on headship and submission.

1. The symbol of submission was being abandoned (1 Cor. 11: 5).

There were two basic problems Paul addressed that were related to women and worship. First, the women were worshiping without the symbol of submission. In Paul’s time some of the women had decided to take off their coverings or veils, which pointed to male headship (authority) and female submission to this authority, while doing the work of God and worshiping God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:5, “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.” Obviously Paul was against the women of Corinth refusing to veil in the worship services of the church as much as he was against men praying and prophesying with their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:4) since these actions would fail to differentiate between the sexes and upset God’s orderly pattern for male authority and female submission, as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Some of the women interpreted their freedom or liberation in a wrong way when taking this uncustomary action of refusing to wear a veil in public and church. The women needed to understand that their liberty in Christ was not liberation from male authority or leadership. It was a liberty to do the will of God instead of following the whimsical desires of the flesh (John 8:36). It’s wonderful that the universal outreach of the Gospel message liberated women from their own sinful lifestyles as well as the oppressive treatment by males (Gal. 3:28). Generally speaking, women in the culture of Bible times were looked down upon and were treated without dignity and respect. They were easily prostituted and treated unfairly by many men. However, the saving impact of the Gospel upon the lives of men and husbands would

liberate women from abusive treatment and give them respect and dignity in the Christian community. Nevertheless, some of the women were taking their liberty too far and were beginning to promote a sexist and feministic philosophy within the church.

We do know from secular history that various movements of women's liberation and feminism appeared in the Roman Empire during New Testament times. Women would often take off their veils or other head coverings and cut their hair in order to look like men. The same kind of rebellion exists today, as women are demanding to be treated exactly like men. They are attacking marriage and claim that a woman raising children is an unjust restriction of their rights. Some even assert their independence by leaving their husbands and homes. They refuse to care for their children, want to live with other men, demand jobs traditionally held by men, wear men's clothing and hairdos, and want to discard all signs of femininity. Some of the women believers at Corinth were influenced by the feministic movement of New Testament times and as a sign of protest and independence they refused to follow the local custom and cover their heads as a sign of female subordination to male authority.

Apparently the women were attending church without a veil and praying and prophesying, within their appropriate boundaries or spheres of local church ministry, without possessing the sign of their submissiveness. Not observing this custom violated the divine order of authority and submission and created a paradox. It sent the message that the women wanted to do the work of God (praying and prophesying) while at the same time disobeying God's order of authority. Not wearing a veil in Corinth became a sign of rebellion instead of obedience to truth.

So the women were actually creating a paradox in refusing to veil, a paradox which consisted of attempting to do God's work, while at the same time disobeying God's local symbol of male headship or authority. They were trying to serve their own selfish interests and practices while doing God's work. In short, they were setting a double standard. How often we do the same today. We attempt to do God's work in our own way without obeying in other areas of our living. Such was the case with some of the women in Corinth. They wanted

to do God's work without considering the necessity to honor male headship. They wanted to selfishly pursue their own interests while doing the work of God.

The mention here of women praying or prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5) is sometimes used to prove that Paul acknowledged the right for women to pray, teach, preach, and lead in church worship. This is a false assumption and does not square with the clear directives in other verses and epistles. *The proper method of interpretation is to always interpret the less clear passages in light of the clear passages.* The teaching of the New Testament is that men are to lead the church in all areas. The pastors and deacons are to be men (1 Timothy 3) and they are to take on the leadership responsibilities. We do know from other Scripture that women were forbidden to pray out loud during the stated gathered meetings (1 Tim. 2:8) or proclaim truth in any authoritative way (1 Tim. 2:11-13). This would rule out any preaching, teaching, and praying while the church corporately meets together in one place.

These are commands based upon the creative order of Genesis that establishes male authority (1 Tim. 2:13). *Because of this we must conclude that God does not genuinely call women to be pastors, leaders, and preachers of God's flock.* Paul actually gives several reasons for the injunction that a woman is not to teach. They are (1) the order of God's creation of man: "for Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13) and (2) the priority of her transgression: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). When putting all the Scriptures together both women and men could pray and prophesy, *but it was very important how they did it.* Both the man and the woman must pray and prophesy in two different ways, the male must look like a man, the woman must look like a woman, and they must do it in their appropriate spheres of ministry.

Throughout history women were always assigned to their appropriate submissive spheres of ministry (Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-20; Luke 2:36-37) and when they led (Judges 4:4; 5:7; 5:24-27) it became a living indictment on the weakness of the men and a shame on the nation (Isaiah 3:12). It might also be added once again that the many actions recorded in the Old Testament are not teaching

passages for the New Testament Church today. Rather, they are historical passages accurately recording history. Piper remarks, “The period of the judges is an especially precarious foundation for building a vision of God’s ideal for leadership.”

To this we would agree. Women who knew their place throughout history always performed their ministry, not by public preaching, but by means of private consultation or with other women (Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-20). Something else must be kept in mind. God granting power or revelation to a person is no sure sign that this person is an ideal model for us to follow in every respect. This is evident in the lives of Abraham and David who practiced polygamy (Deut. 17:17). The point is this. A person can emerge onto the scene and be blessed by God in certain ways without God condoning every area or facet of their lives. What about Samson and Saul? What about the Corinthians? We must constantly look at the clear comments and commands of Scripture to determine God’s approval of certain actions or practices instead of merely looking at the lives of people. The safe thing to do is look at the clear commands and then examine and study Bible characters from this perspective.

With this in mind it’s significant that our text in 1 Corinthians 11:5 makes no mention that the official times of meeting or the corporate worship of the church was actually taking place during the women’s time of praying or prophesying, where men would be joined with women to represent the local church authority. *There are many other occasions throughout the assembled gathering where a woman could exercise the oral ministry of prayer and prophesying without infringing on the authority of the man.* In other words, women could freely use their gifts when the church was not holding their official meetings and where men would not represent the established authority and leadership.

Perhaps women would pray and prophesy throughout the course of the Lord’s Day when fellowshiping with others (Acts 2:42) and when the meetings were not officially underway. They could do so as they fellowshiped with other people during the times of the Love Feast (1 Cor. 11:17-21) or when they held special meetings with other ladies (Titus 2:3-4). There certainly was a time and place for the women to pray and use their prophesying gift. They could pray with other

women and single out certain individuals to encourage and share with them on a one-on-one basis.

Vine and some other authors argue that the meetings or times of gathering of the Lord's Day were not even in view in verses 1-16. What verses 4-6 are referring to is women prophesying outside the church ministry in such places as street corners, market places, and private homes. Such explanations have not been persuasive because there is no indication in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 that Paul was using a restrictive meaning. It's assumed that not until verse 17 Paul brings the gathered meetings into view with the mention of "that ye come together" and also verses 18 and 20, "When ye come together." This view is taken to enforce in a greater way that women did not prophesy or pray within the stated gatherings of the early church due to the other clear Scriptures that forbid women to participate in any authoritative way within church worship services. However, this interpretive conclusion is not necessary in order to harmonize with other portions of Scripture, which call for the silence of women. This is because throughout the course of a full day (Sunday), which was the common length of time for early church gatherings, the women could use their gifts in particular spheres of ministry, other than the actual service times, when everybody was gathered together for worship.

There is no reason to force verses 1-16 outside the local church setting or times of gathering. Actually, verse 17 ("I praise ye not, that ye come together"), verse 18 ("when ye come together"), and verse 20 ("when ye come together") seems to suggest that the prior verses were likely referring to assembly life and that Paul was actually extending his thoughts about church life and activity instead of just beginning to talk about church ministry. To try and regulate the women to only praying and prophesying outside church ministry seems to stretch Paul's thoughts. Much of the women's ministry took place in the local church for this was the day of gathering. Therefore, the understanding of the previous verses (vv. 4-6) is that the women could pray and prophesy on the Lord's Day in their appropriate times and spheres of ministry without overriding male authority. This corresponds perfectly with all other Scriptures.

Putting all the Biblical data together would lead us to believe that 1 Corinthians 11:5 could only be giving permission for the women to *silently* pray during the stated gatherings of the church and to audibly pray and prophesy to *individuals* in the assembly *when the official gathering times of worship are not underway*. The women could teach another believer on a one-on-one basis (Acts 18:26) when the officially stated times of gathering were not underway and where men would not be present to represent the authority. They could also teach other women (Titus 2:3-4). There would be many opportunities throughout the course of a Sunday where women could pray and use their prophesying gift. They could pray with other women and prophecy to others outside the official stated gatherings of corporate worship. Of course, women could also pray and prophesy outside the boundaries and context of the local church setting (Acts 21:8-9). *In short, women were used in teaching, missionary, and prayer ministry where male authority was not in question*. This was true in all phases of church ministry and life. The opportunities were great and godly women took advantage of using their gifts without usurping the place of the man in the local assembly, defying Paul's clear commands, and disgracing their femininity.

The key to remember is that there are limitations upon the exercise of the woman's gifts. How they exercised their gifts was very important. They were to do so without usurping man's authority in the area of teaching, preaching, leading in prayer, or prophesying and praying in the official public gatherings of the church. Vine is right when he adds this comment: "The conclusion that Philip's daughters prophesied in assembly meetings is without foundation and is contradicted in the teachings of the Epistles. So with the case of Elizabeth in Luke 1:42-45 and that of Anna in 2:38." Primarily women were to teach and train persons of their own sex that they may live above reproach and so "the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

Was Paul coming down on women? No. It is important to realize that Paul spoke highly of Christian women of his day. He expresses his deep appreciation for their service with him in the Gospel on several occasions (Romans 16:1-2; Phil. 4:3). Paul deeply appreciated their pattern of selfless service to others and for the expansion of the Gospel message. Women who served the Lord were greatly valued by Paul. He knew that women have great potentialities for good in the

churches and evangelism but they also had the potential for evil. Satan works through women today as he did with Eve in the beginning (1 Tim. 2:14).

The obvious point is this. The women's labor in the Gospel and in the Lord could not and did not involve public preaching and teaching in the churches where male authority would be questioned. Could one imagine the apostle sharing a pulpit or platform with these women, or standing with them in the synagogues, or on Mars' Hill (Acts 17)? Never! However, we can see these women visiting homes and teaching women and children. We can see them praying with other women, speaking to the lost about Christ, and encouraging other women in their commitment to Christ. Some women can be reached effectively only by women. We can also see these women coordinating many details of church ministry and using their gifts effectively where male authority is never questioned. As stated above, they were used in teaching, missionary, and praying ministry wherever male authority was not in question.

We must remember that the epistle to the Romans, where Paul speaks of the service of women (Rom. 16:1-2), was actually written from Corinth. Paul had already written that it was shameful for a woman to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:35). The point is this. Paul is not inconsistent with his instructions. Women could not have a public teaching ministry among the local churches, whether in Corinth or in Rome, but they could be used extensively in teaching other women, children, and be used in other missionary activities. Paul saw the great value and usefulness women could have upon church ministry even though he makes clear statements forbidding women to usurp the authority of men in the local church setting (preaching, teaching, prophesying, praying, speaking in tongues, judging prophetic messages, etc.).

1 Corinthians 11:4-5 again reads:

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

So what is Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 11:4–5? His main thrust cannot be mistaken. Whenever men and women would pray or prophesy in their appropriate spheres of church ministry, they should do so with the proper distinctions made between male and female, those distinctions that represent the divine order of headship and submission. Men were not to wear any kind of veil and the women were to wear the customary veil, which was the sign of her submissiveness to male authority. Both a woman or a man could pray and prophesy, but it was very important how they did it. This is the emphasis the passage makes. They must do it in two different ways, the male as a man, the woman as a woman. That is the central emphasis of this text.

We sometimes forget that the distinction between masculinity and femininity represent the natural creative order that God wants mankind to follow – male headship and female submission. When the marks of femininity and masculinity are blurred it becomes a sign that society is no longer concerned about God's creative order of male headship and female submission. This is why Paul argued for the customary practice of women veiling and men refusing to cover their heads when worshiping God. These customs reflected the distinction among the sexes and also represented God's order of headship and submission. To do away with them means to do away with God's law.

The point of application is this. God does not want sexual distinction to be blurred. Men are to look like men when they worship God and women are to look like women when they worship God so they distinguish the sexes and do not upset the picture of creative order between male headship and female submission (1 Cor. 11:3). *We are to remain different from one another and reflect the role differences that are established in our local customs.* We are to honor and illustrate God's plan for headship and submission in this way.

We must also honor and reflect God's unchanging and universal mark of sexual distinction that He has placed upon the human race when we worship God (1 Cor. 11:14-15). A man is to have short hair and a woman is to have long hair to keep the clear picture of sexual distinction and illustrate the picture of male headship and female submission. In short, a man is not to look like a sissy when he worships God! This should be true according to the cultural signs of

masculinity and femininity and according to God's unchanging signs of masculinity and femininity. These signs reflect the creative order.

I remember not too long ago when man was considered to be a sissy for wearing earrings, necklaces, and makeup. But over the years the cultural practices are being blurred to eliminate the distinction of the sexes and God's order of headship and submission. He is not to have earrings coming out of his ears, wear girlish necklaces, and dress in any manner that would reflect a woman's cultural dress nor violate the unchanging marks of sexual distinction. Not long ago I witnessed a man wearing a dress while he was being interviewed on a talk show. The point is this. Men are not to break down the cultural signs of masculinity and attempt to look like a woman in their appearance and dress. Similarly, a woman is not to look like a man when she worships God. She is to look feminine and appear in her overall dress and appearance to be a woman.

I think of the rebellious hippie movement of the sixties, which still existed today to some degree. This movement demonstrates a rebellion against God's creative order of headship and submission. I remember seeing those long-haired hippies riding their motorcycle choppers passed the house. Their hair was blowing in the wind and they appeared to be free as the wind. But the truth is this. The hippie movement and long hair on men today still reflects rebellion against God's natural creative order of male headship. If a man can look like the woman, then the man no longer has to be head of the woman and care for her according to God's design. He can commit so-called free sex and live in rebellion against God.

Today we also have the feminist movement pushing hairstyles that look like men in order to further blur the distinction among the sexes and cast a shadow on God's creative law of women submission. I remember passing a convertible car on the freeway. I thought the woman was driving the car for her hair was blowing in the wind. The passenger had hair that was shaven. But to my surprise the man was actually driving the car with his long woman-like hair and the woman was sitting in the passenger side with her head shaven like a man. This is called role reversal, which has an underlying purpose to mock God's creative design for male headship and submission. Man may

not always realize this but it is the underlying reason for the unisex movement of today.

When a woman wants to look like a man in hairstyle, when a woman wants to dress exactly like a man, then she has a spiritual flaw. *Her appearance sends the message that she does not care about God's orderly design.* The same is true about a man with long hair. Men, cut your hair like a man, and stop playing around with God's design. Women, don't chop your hair like a man. Keep a noticeable difference and distinction and remember what you are reflecting by your hair. As Christian men and women we must remember that we are sending messages up to God by the way we dress and look. We are to keep the sexual distinction clear and teach by our distinction male headship and female submission.

Today in our culture the distinction among the sexes is being blurred by the unisex patterns of dress and outward adornment. Paul is saying that when we blur the distinctions among the sexes in our time of worship we demonstrate rebellion against God's creative design for headship and submission. This is why we are to look like men and women. Stop trying to break down the walls of demarcation. We must remember that the key reason for the distinction among the sexes is to represent God's creative order for male headship and submission.

The women in Corinth were saying they are free but they misinterpreted their freedom. They were saying, "It doesn't matter what we wear because only what's on the inside matters to God. We'll appear anyway we want to appear." But Paul responds to these women, "No, your appearance is important because it says some things about you. Your apparel is a testimony of your modesty, obedience, and submission to male headship."

In Corinth the cultural practice of wearing of a veil was part of this feminine design, modesty, and submissiveness to male authority. Paul's was then saying that when the women used their spiritual gifts in church ministry that they were to do so with their heads covered and follow the local custom. They were to follow the local custom that taught male headship and female submission while praying and prophesying in their appropriate spheres of ministry within the context of the local church. There is a noticeable point of application to our

lives today. What we wear when we enter God's house testifies to our spirit of modesty and submissiveness to the divinely appointed authority of God. It also says something about who we are.

The Lord is simply saying in these verses that if we want to be considered respectable, we must dress in a respectable manner. God does know our hearts (1 Sam. 16:7). He knows what we are on the inside (1 Cor. 4:5). But we must also remember as children of God that only God looks in our hearts. Since human beings can only see the outward appearance, it is important that we do not let what we are on the outside *contradict* what we are on the inside! Our apparel and appearance in church does tell something about our attitude toward the worship of God. When we come to church dressed like we do when mowing the yard or going to a baseball game we are practicing irreverence for God. When we come into God's presence we should strive to look our best and present the best possible picture of masculinity and femininity. This is what Paul is saying.

2. The silence of women was being abolished (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

There was another women problem that Paul had to deal with in the church of Corinth. The one practice (refusing to veil) eventually lead to another practice (speaking out in authority). During the gathered meetings the women were actually rising up and speaking out in an authoritative manner.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Paul had just condemned the practice of speaking out in a disorderly fashion with prophetic messages and tongue speaking (vs. 33) and now he adds another truth that will help clear up the confusion and chaos. Women were not even allowed to speak in an authoritative manner in the local assemblies (vss. 34-35). The women who joined in the chaotic expression, which Paul has been condemning in verse 33, not only added to the confusion, *but should not have been speaking in the first place!* When Paul said that women were not

permitted to speak he was referring to the practice of speaking in tongues, prophesying, or judging the prophet's messages in the local assembly (1 Cor. 11: 23-24, 29).

Any other interpretation would be unwarranted. The context argues for speaking in these various ways and to add any other meaning to the women speaking would be doing an injustice to the context and interpretation of this text. The women were not to participate in the church meetings with their own prophesying or tongue speaking nor were they allowed to examine the prophet's messages by asking questions about them. *The speaking has to do with all authoritative speaking in the local assemblies.* To conclude that women were merely being chided for chattering and interrupting the meetings with gossip is not what Paul is saying.

Some suggest that the instruction for women to keep silence in the church merely prohibits their chattering or gossiping while the service is in progress. This again is a false assessment that defies the contextual evidence for what the speaking means. The passage says, "it is not permitted unto to them to speak." The word translated "speak" here never has the meaning of "chatter" or "babble" in the New Testament. The same word is used of God in verse 21 which reads "with men of other tongues ... will I speak." The command, "Let the women keep silence in the churches," is preceded only a few lines earlier by a similar command enjoining the keeping of silence on the part of men, with reference to speaking with tongues, where there is no interpreter. Silence means silence! The entire context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is that of exercising spiritual gifts and ministries in the assembly. Paul is forbidding the women to exercise the gift of tongues or prophesy in the meetings before men.

This is entirely consistent with his teaching in 1 Timothy chapter two. The emphasis on the word speak in the expression "not permitted unto them to speak" (vs. 34) and "for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (vs. 35) clarifies the interpretation that Paul has in mind *speaking in any authoritative way* such as speaking forth prophetic utterances, tongue speaking, or speaking out by questioning the prophetic messages of the prophets. Thus, the kind of speaking that Paul addresses refers to presenting truth through the medium of tongues, prophesying, or any other authoritative teaching

or speaking position (questioning and evaluating prophetic messages) that usurps man's right and authority (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

Paul says that this command for the women to be silent applies "in all churches" (1 Cor. 14:34). This epistle is addressed, not only to the church in Corinth, but to "all that call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place" (1:2). The command of women not speaking in church services is universal; it applies to all the churches, not just to certain local, geographical, or cultural situations. Paul then concludes by saying that the women were not to speak in the local church assembly in any authoritative way but were to ask their husbands questions in the home setting (1 Cor. 14:35). The point is this. *They were to be silent learners and not authoritative speakers in assembly life.* They must "learn in silence" as Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:11 ("Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection"). A woman is to learn in silence. This forbids any authoritative speaking where a woman usurps man's role and position as the authority figure.

Evidently Paul adds something about women asking questions in the home (1 Cor. 14:35) for there were those groups of women in Corinth who were also creating questions and arguments, within the church setting, concerning the prophetic messages that were being presented by the prophets (vs. 29 – "let them that judge"). Some women began to evaluate the prophetic messages and openly ask questions about these messages and this too was a forbidden practice for the women. This was yet another form of authoritative speaking that was forbidden for women to participate with.

The women were out of place when standing up, evaluating, asking questions about the prophetic messages, and arguing for their legitimacy. Some of them were becoming argumentative and "preachy" even while vocalizing their opinions of the prophetic utterances. So women were not to speak in any authoritative way in the local church assemblies or gatherings. This is Paul's full and final message in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The immediate context dealing with tongues, prophesying, and judging prophetic messages supports this conclusion. They were to be silent learners instead of teachers or preachers in the assembly life. This is what Paul meant in verses 34-35.

The Roots of the Teaching

Paul was not about to dodge the problem of women in the local church and neither should we today! The authoritative speaking of women in the local assemblies was forbidden and this is the clear teaching in the New Testament epistles. This conclusion is not sexist – it's Biblical. This conclusion of male leadership in the church assembly is based upon the original order of Genesis. Paul mentions in the very context of 1 Corinthians chapter eleven (vss. 8-9). In 1 Corinthians 14:34 he also states "for they are commanded to be under obedience, also saith the law." What law is this? It's *the law of authority and submission* that was established in the Pentateuch or book of Genesis. This is a precept approved by God from the very beginning (Genesis 2:15-25; 3:16).

Paul's argument for authority and submission in the local church setting was not based on cultural standards but on the historic and foundational facts of God's creative law that was designed in Genesis. The universal law of headship and submission is based upon the origin design stated in Genesis. This is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:16 that no man should quarrel or argue over what he has just said concerning the Genesis principle of submission ("we have no such custom, neither the churches of God"). In other words, the principle of male headship and female submission is not something to argue about and it should never be compromised.

Paul always referred to creation to support his teaching about women (1 Tim. 2:13). *Creation is something that transcends culture*. Paul referred to the fall of man as added support of his teaching (1 Tim. 2:14). Again, this shows that his teaching transcends any one culture. Paul commanded that his instructions were to be kept until Christ's coming (1 Tim. 6:13, 14). Thus they are for every church in every century! Paul's letter to Timothy in which he spoke of the woman's subjection to the men in the church is a letter, which teaches general church order (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul's letter to Corinth in which he spoke of women being in subjection to men was for all Christians (1 Cor. 1:2) and all churches (1 Cor. 14:33), not just those at Corinth. Paul said these instructions are the commandments of God (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul also said these instructions are tests of spirituality (1 Cor. 14:36,

37). Therefore, those today who do not submit to Paul's teaching about women are revealing a lack in their spiritual manner of living.

Some suggest since Paul was an unmarried man that he does not have the right to teach about women. The claim is made that he was prejudiced against women as other Jewish men of that day. But we know that Paul was authorized to write about marriage and women in the church, not because of any superior marital relationship he possessed or superior knowledge he had of himself, but because he was chosen of God to be an apostle and to deliver the revelation of God (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Galatians 1:1,11,12). People will do anything to disregard Scripture (absolute truth) and promote their own ideas and movements.

One writer said: "It seems that most of the fads and misconceptions of the world eventually find their way into the church. Worldly Christians continually try to find ways to justify their worldliness, if possible on the basis of Scripture." This is a very true statement and tells the story why feministic doctrine has invaded the church and why many women are trying to actually use the Bible to support their contemporary feministic ideas. They are trying to interpret the Bible to justify their own worldly practices in the church.

It must be understood that women may be gifted in teaching and possess the gifts of helps or governments but these gifts are not to be exercised over men in the actual services of the church. They are to be channeled to individual groups of women and other people through informal Bible studies and other special meetings. God has ordained order in His creation. It's an order that reflects His own nature (the Godhead) and should be the same order that is reflected in His church.

When any part of His order is ignored or rejected the church becomes weakened and God is dishonored. Furthermore, when God's order is reversed masculinity and femininity are shamed. It is shameful for a woman to strut around on a stage in a church service and teach other men. It is shameful to true femininity, it is shameful to God's design, and it is shameful to God Himself. The feminist movement of today has attempted to defy God's order and create a new order for the church that defies God's original design and purpose.

I have observed over the years when a congregation understands and accepts Biblical truth regarding headship and submission that the congregation can be orderly and peaceful (1 Cor. 14:40). But when this Biblical truth is not followed and understood, chaos, confusion, and disorder result. When ladies do not understand spiritual headship and become too outspoken and active in the business affairs of the church, then problems and difficulties occur.

So what was happening in Corinth? The women in Corinth were saying, "We are free in Jesus. Therefore, we can do as we please." But Paul was saying, "Oh, no, you are under divinely appointed headship and must submit to male authority." It seems that the Corinthian slogan, "Everything is permissible," had been applied to meetings of the church as well, and the Corinthian women had expressed that principle by throwing off their distinguishing dress. One of the problems we have discussed is that some Christian women were praying and prophesying in the church, even within their divinely prescribed limits and boundaries, without wearing a veil.

Failure to observe this cultural practice upset the divine order of authority and submission. It sent a double message – one of service to Christ and at the same time personal rebellion against God's design. Rebellion against God's order was demonstrated by women praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. They would enter the meetings inappropriately and worship the Lord in a fashion that promoted disapproval for God's design.

Other more liberated women went a step further and actually began to speak out in a fashion that was forbidden according to the principle of headship and submission. They wanted to present themselves as authority figures in the local assembly. For these reasons Paul knew he had to mention about God's divine order of authority and submission. Some of the Christian women of Corinth had to understand what God's Word said about female submission in the realm of church life and ministry.

By the way, it's been my observation that when a woman does not want to submit to the order of male local church authority that she will not submit to male authority in the home. In other words, you can be sure that she will not be willing to follow the leadership of her

husband in the home setting if she is not willing to be submissive to male leadership and authority in the local church. When a woman rises up to dominate a church ministry she has already risen up and dominated her husband. She is leading him around on a leash. You can be sure of this. The one presupposes the other.

2. The cultural practice – 4-6

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

For the Man

There were appropriate customs that symbolized the divine order of headship and submission and reminded both men and women of their correct places in God’s divine scheme. This is what we want to investigate in the next verses. The phrase “having his head covered” (vs. 4) literally means “having down from head” and is usually taken to refer to a veil. The context implies that in Corinth such a head covering would have been completely ridiculous for a man and completely proper for a woman. It was a disgrace for a man to worship with his head covered. Doing so would dishonor or disgrace his head, which is Christ. This is obviously not referring to his own physical head but to the fundamental proposition that was just stated in the previous verse concerning headship (vs. 3).

The statement about his head follows from the previous one. Paul is using the word “head” in a metaphorical way. When a man would worship with his head covered he was disgracing his spiritual head – Christ. He would not only be shamefully depicting himself as a woman and disgracing masculinity but also show dishonor and disrespect for Jesus Christ. To veil his head would suggest that he was *refusing to follow the divine order of verse three* and wanted no authority figure over his life and that he wanted to live independently of Jesus Christ. *It would suggest a reversal of the proper relationship that a man was to have with Christ.* The covering on a man would

seem to indicate another authority coming between the man and Christ.

This is why a man veiling was a practice that was culturally forbidden in Corinth. What the action represented was rebellion toward God's order as stated in verse three. It conveyed the message of living independent of Christ's authority and rule. If we swing the pendulum in the other direction, we can conclude that a man praying or prophesying *without* a head covering in the Corinthian society would naturally represent his God-given authority over women. The fact that the man refused to veil taught that man was not only ruled by Christ (his head) but that he was different than the women because he was in charge and given rulership and authority over her and the church.

It is very remarkable that Paul would say that a man, ministering in church, should not have anything on his head, for the practice among the Jews was for men to wear a head covering in public and when they ministered. This was certainly a blow to those Jewish men who had not yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Devout Jewish men still wear a head covering today. This is because some ancient rabbis had misinterpreted Exodus 34:33–35. They taught that Jewish men should cover their heads when they prayed because Moses veiled his face in the presence of God's glory. *But a careful reading of the text says that it was in the people's presence, not God's presence, that Moses wore the veil* (see 2 Cor. 3:13). Moses did not want the people to see the glory of God, which he had received in God's presence, fading from his face. The Jewish tradition of men covering their heads to pray is therefore a human tradition, not a divine one.

For the Woman

There are those who interpret the veil in verses 4-7 as referring to the veil of the woman's natural hair since Paul mentions about this in verse 15. The suggestion is made that liberated women were bopping up their hair, or putting their hair up like they did in the sixties, in order to show their independence from men and rebellion to the teaching of submission. But this interpretation is highly unlikely. The phrasing of verse 6 proves that a separate covering, other than the hair, is being discussed. Paul did not say if a woman has put up her hair let her be shaven! Also, the Greek word for "covering" in verses 4-7 is different

from the Greek word used in verse 15. Paul uses a different word to distinguish between the artificial and natural veil. A casual reading of these verses (vv. 4-7) would suggest that a literal veil is in view.

With this in mind, the opposite would be true of the woman (vs. 5). Unlike the man (vs. 4), the woman would dishonor her head if she decided to serve without a veil. Ray Stedman says: "The veil comes in as the symbol of the acceptance and understanding of the principle of headship." *Covering the head appears to have been a customary symbol of subordination in Corinthian society, as in much of the ancient world.* If a woman attempted to worship God in the local church setting with her head uncovered (without a veil) in this 1st century Christian setting then she would dishonor her head, which is her husband (vs. 3).

Once again this is not referring to her physical head but to the principle of headship just established in verse three. A woman who refused to veil according to local custom of Corinth would confuse the sexes, appear as a man, and shame her femininity. But more than disgracing herself she would disgrace her head (husband). Why? It's because the woman who worships without a veil is sending the message that she does not have a head or authority figure and leader over her life.

She is also sending the message that she does not want to be submissive to male authority in the local church setting and society in general. Instead, she wants to rise up and live her life outside the prescribed boundaries of God's divine order. Her pattern of behavior, refusing to veil, was a symbol of her rebellion against the created order and God's intended relationship between a man and woman. *It would suggest a reversal of the proper relationship that she was to have with her husband.* Her failure to wear a head covering communicated a sign of rebellion and independence to everyone present in worship. The veil in Corinth communicated a submissive demeanor to God's divine order and was also a female adornment that made a clear distinction among the sexes.

One writer stated it well:

"In Paul's day numerous symbols were used to signify the woman's subordinate relationship to men, particularly of wives to husbands.

Usually the symbol was in the form of a head covering, and in the Greek–Roman world of Corinth the symbol apparently was a veil of some kind. In many Near East countries today a married woman’s veil still signifies that she will not expose herself to other men, that her beauty and charms are reserved entirely for her husband, that she does not care even to be noticed by other men. Similarly, in the culture of first–century Corinth wearing a head covering while ministering or worshipping was a woman’s way of stating her devotion and submission to her husband and of demonstrating her commitment to God.”

So Paul wanted the men and women to follow the established local custom of Corinth since the custom reflected the role relationship between man and woman and the divine order of headship and submission that God had established in Genesis. The application of headship in the culture and custom of that day and time was for women to veil. Since man is the head of woman she should adorn herself with a head covering. Failure to do so would bring shame upon her head – husband. This was true for Corinth and it’s still true for many Eastern countries. The veil is a sign of submission to headship and male authority. In fact, the local custom of veiling in Corinth was such an important sign of submission to male authority that to refuse to veil was the same as being shorn or completely shaving one’s head.

1 Corinthians 11:6

“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.”

The word “shorn” (keiro) means to shear and was used of cropping the hair of sheep (Acts 8:32). The word suggests cutting or cropping the hair short like a man’s hair (to be cut in a manly style). The word “shaven” (xurao) may suggest being completely bald (Acts 21:24). Paul reasons that for a woman of Corinth to remove her artificial covering would be as shameful as removing the natural covering of her hair. The one action would be similar to the other action (vs. 5b – “for that is even all one as if she were shaven”). It was a shame for any women to have her hair cut short or be bald and the same would be true if she would remove her veil in public and worship. No woman

with the slightest sense of shame would think of being shaven in public. This is true not only in Corinth but also in our world today.

Why should a woman be ashamed if she cuts her hair or shaves her head? What kind of shame would a woman experience? First, she would experience *physical* shame for the simple reason that she would look like a man (1 Cor. 11:14-15). The woman would be shamed because natural instinct teaches her that a woman is to have longer hair (vs. 15). A woman should sense shame when she looks like a man. I wish some women today in our country would take heart to what the Bible really says about short and shaven hair on women. Women who want to cut and shave themselves like a man should be ashamed of themselves. Ladies, do not make your hair short like a man and cut your femininity away!

Second, she would experience *spiritual* shame by disobeying God's commands to express submission to male authority. This is evident because in the next verses Paul gives some clear-cut reasons why the woman should be covered instead of shaven (vss. 7-10). So the very fact that she is disobeying God's creative purpose and command for female submission would bring shame to her. Whether she realizes it or not it's true. When a woman tries to look like a man in any culture she is disobeying God's design for submission and this brings shame to her.

Vine agrees with this when saying: "The basis of the injunction that the woman, instead of being shorn, should wear her hair long, is that 'the head of the woman is the man,' that 'the woman is the glory of the man,' that for this reason a woman unveiled dishonors her head, and that in addition to the temporary veil, her hair is given to her for a covering or veil. ... her long hair being symbolic of the divine principle of subjection, the token of this and its relation to divinely appointed headship would be removed." Vine's analysis is correct. She would also be shamed when she shaves her head since she loses the natural veil that God gave to her which pointed to her submission to male authority. She would be ashamed because her shaven head would tell the story of her rebellion against God's order and design of headship and submission.

Paul may also have a third type of shame in mind. Since he was talking about the cultural sign of veiling he may also bring to the people's attention another cultural sign - prostitutes refusing to veil. So thirdly, a shaven woman would be *morally* shamed. This is because short and shaven hair is not only unbecoming to femininity (vs. 15) but in Corinth it also was a sign of immoral behavior and prostitution. The shame would not only come from shaving off the natural veil that was God's sign for femininity and submission, shame would also be experienced because of the local pagan custom of prostitution. Under the law a woman's head was shaven when she was captured from the enemy and taken to be a man's wife. Her hair was shorn while she would lament for her family but after a month the man would take her to be his wife (Deut. 21:13). But the shaved head of a woman in Corinth had a particular message attached to it.

We must understand the particular situation of veiling in the context that it was written. In Eastern culture during this time respectable women attired themselves with veils that covered their heads and hair. The veils were symbols of *modesty* and *submission* to male authority. When veils were not worn it was an outward demonstration and visibly displayed message that they did not want to be under any man's authority and that they had no husband. The only exception of women who did not wear veils was at the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. The temple was located on the Acro-Corinthus, a hill just beyond the city, and a thousand sacred priestesses (prostitutes) led the pagan worship services. Sex and worship were meshed together in those days as it is today.

Sex is the religion of America today and the world at large. One does not have to look very long to see that this world worships sex outside of marriage. During the time Corinthians was written prostitutes wore their hair short and did not wear any covering over their head. Anyway, these prostitutes in Corinth were easily recognized in society or public because they appeared with their heads uncovered and their hair extremely short. The moment people saw a woman like this in public, let alone the church, they knew that she was a priestess. The meaning of the veil in the Eastern World was no mystery.

A veiled woman walking down a street of an Oriental city was telling the whole world "I am not for sale; I do not belong to anyone but my

husband; I am his." She was also saying that her veiled hair or natural beauty was for him alone to view and not others. So what was happening in Corinthian worship services? The women were refusing to veil taking on the appearance of the women in the temple of Aphrodite.

History proves that Corinth was the most licentious city of the 1st century and the only women who did not wear a veil were the temple prostitutes. Any woman, therefore, who appeared on the public streets without a veil was opening herself up to the suspicion that she was available to any man who wanted to pay the price, that she was nothing more than a temple prostitute. It was indeed disgraceful, shameful, for a woman to appear in public without a veil. Every woman living in the culture of this day should have been ashamed to appear in public without a veil or with her head shaved and hair cut short because then she would reveal herself as a temple prostitute who wanted no male authority over her life. She would send the message that she was in rebellion against God's established form of authority. Furthermore, she would strip herself of her femininity since nature itself reveals that women are to have longer hair to be feminine in appearance.

The Talmud indicates that a Jew considered a woman with a shaved head extremely ugly, and Chrysostom records that women guilty of adultery had their hair shaved off and were marked as prostitutes. *The point is this. To remove the veil would be the same as removing a lady's hair.* It would confuse the sexes and give the shameful impression that women are behaving like men.

So the local custom in Corinth was that prostitutes of the pagan temple would cut their hair short. In addition, those who were of the most extreme elements in the feminist movement would also shave their heads or cut their hair short as a sign of rebellion to God's law of headship and submission. Paul is saying that the unveiled head of a woman in Corinth is as shameful as if her hair were cut off. Of course, the apostle is *not* commanding that a woman shave her head but is rather telling what moral consistency would require. If a woman walks around and attends church without a veil, then moral consistency would suggest that she is in rebellion against God like those who shave their heads. She wants no authority over her life. She does not

want to be in submission to God's order and demonstrate that she is committed to one man for a lifetime.

Paul therefore is saying, "If you are not willing to look like a rebellious prostitute or feminist by cutting off your hair, then don't pray or prophesy with your head uncovered. Don't take on the appearance that you are in rebellion against God." This reminds me of how many people today, who call themselves Christians, want to identify with the extreme element in our society such as punk rock artists. They want to change their looks and identify with the grotesque and pagan ways of society. They have spikes coming out of their necks and wires coming out of their noses. Why? It's because they have rebellion in their hearts against God's natural design and order for men and women. They want to rebel against God's creative order. Furthermore, they possess pride in their hearts wanting to be seen and noticed by others (1 John 2:15-17).

Now we need to deal with the local custom of Corinth in light of today. The historical evidence points to the fact that there was a public head covering for women, which was a universal custom in the first century, for both Jewish and Greco-Roman culture. The nature of the covering varied considerably and one cannot be dogmatic of the nature of the covering in Corinth and it is futile to argue over this moot point. Many suggest that the covering was more like a shawl, which extended from the veil over the head, something like a parka rather than a veil over the face.

Archeologists have uncovered sketches and sculptures of this kind of head covering in the Greco-Roman world. Vincent remarked: "In the sculptures of the catacombs the women have a close-fitting head-dress, while the men have the hair short." One thing is for sure. The veil was not a stylish hat, cap, or inconspicuous doily, as some western women wear today. Furthermore, in first-century Judaism and the Roman world, wearing a head covering in public was a sign of a woman's submission to her husband. But what about our culture of today?

There are entire movements, such as the Mennonite and Amish Movements, as well as sincere Christians, who insist that 1 Corinthians chapter eleven teaches the importance of women veiling

in all churches for all time. In other words, they view this as a command to follow for all churches throughout the history of the local church. To not veil is disobedience to Paul's command and to Scripture. I don't accept this position for several reasons. But before stating these reasons let me share something that C. I. Scofield wrote. "Nothing could be more contrary to the whole spirit of this dispensation than to use the casual mention of an ancient custom in a Greek city as fastening a legal and, so to speak, Levitical ceremony upon Christians in all ages."

This is very true. To enforce a veiling custom under the administration of grace seems to go against serving the Lord in "the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). Under the law administration there were many tedious rules that pertained to the outworking of God's dispensational purpose for Israel which today contrasts to the freedom we have from strict minuscule rules that have no further purpose or typical lessons behind them under grace (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18).

Under grace the typical laws have been abolished and exchanged for the reality. Such is the whole tenor of New Testament teaching under grace. Therefore, to enforce a strict code for veiling upon all women in the age of grace seems to suppress the true freedom or liberty we have under grace from laws that portray illustrative and typical lessons. The practice of veiling, when forced upon others, seems to represent the spirit that is behind the oldness of the letter.

There are three Biblical reasons why veiling is not necessary.

1. Paul was enforcing the Genesis principle (1 Cor. 11:3).

We must remember that the backdrop to all of this talk about veiling and sexual difference is the Genesis arrangement of male headship and female submission. The ways and workings of the Godhead are reflected in the teaching of functional headship and submission. Man and woman were created in the very beginning to reflect the functional authority and submission of the Godhead. This is what Paul is really teaching (vs. 3). *Verse three is the principle truth that must be applied to all churches for all time.* It is this truth that we are not to quarrel about but accept wholeheartedly and hold to

tenaciously (vs. 16). Behind the instructions for veiling is the underlying premise of God's creation and the way He wants things in the home, society, and church. Paul is not impressing the need for women to veil in all the churches but to observe the Genesis principle of headship and submission which is behind the veiling practice of Corinth.

We must remember that Paul is simply answering the questions that were sent to him (1 Cor. 7:1), one of them concerning veiling, and he does so by stating the unchanging principle in verse three and then applying this principle to the local situation of Corinth. Because of verse three (the original Genesis principle) verses four and five are necessary to observe in Corinth (the local custom). So Paul answers the questions of the people, regarding their local custom, by giving to them the unchanging principle. *What was unchanging was the beginning law in Genesis and Paul merely relates this law to the local custom of the day in answering the questions that the people asked him.* He answers their other questions in the same way concerning the Lord's Supper and spiritual gifts. He tells them the commanding and unchanging truths and then applies it to what was happening in the churches or the local situation (1 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:3-7, chapters 13-14, 15:1-3).

Paul tells the Corinthians what God says and then seeks to apply the commands and enduring truths to the local situations at Corinth. This is what he did concerning the matter of veiling. He gives the unchanging truth (1 Cor. 11:3) and then seeks to apply this truth to the local situation and custom (1 Cor. 11:4-5). So Paul was only concerned about head coverings because of the message they sent to people in the Corinthian culture. *Paul is not arguing for head coverings from creation but for submission.*

Those who interpret this passage as referring to the absolute necessity for women to veil in all churches for all times miss what Paul was actually enforcing. Paul does not enforce first century customs but the Genesis order and arrangement. He starts with the unchanging truth (vs. 3) and then *applies* this truth to the local custom. All customs must be followed that comply with this arrangement and the God-given sense of femininity and female

submission (13-15) but the Genesis principle is the important and underlying factor for women to observe for all time.

We might ask a very valid question at this point of our study. “Did Eve wear a veil?” The Bible does not say that she did. In fact, they did not wear anything! Since the headship and submission arrangement was from the beginning of creation, as we have already proven, then it seems that this is all Paul is enforcing on the churches of New Testament times and throughout the future New Testament era. Since women did not wear coverings throughout the entire history of the human race it is not necessary for women to wear them outside those cultural boundaries that do not wear them or see them as having significance and meaning.

One Mennonite author said Paul argued that women should veil in verse six and then gave clear reasons why they should veil. In fact, the writer then proceeded to point out in verses 7-8 that Paul went back to creation to prove Christian women should veil. This argument sounds convincing on the surface but the writer *put the cart before the horse*. Paul starts with creation (vs. 3) and then he explains veiling in light of creation (vss. 5-6). He does not start with veiling and then go back to creation. There is a difference! The Corinthian women were to follow the local custom of veiling in light of creation, *which pointed to submission. They were not expected to follow veiling from creation*. Veiling was simply the custom born out of the Genesis teaching about submission – it was not the actual teaching of creation.

In other words, the women were not to follow the practice of veiling because it was a command established in creation. We know this is true since Adam and Eve did not have veils or any clothing! They followed the practice of veiling only because it was a customary sign that reflected the Genesis command for submission. Lastly, if one takes a close look at the text Paul is actually arguing that men should refuse to veil when going back to creation (vs. 7). He is not arguing that women should veil and then proving it from creation.

2. Paul was acknowledging the application principle (1 Cor. 11:13).

“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?” Paul is asking the Corinthians to judge or discern whether or not it’s “comely” or suitable, fitting and proper for a Christian woman to veil in their local community and cultural society. When he poses the question of whether it is proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered, he is obviously appealing to the cultural considerations of the day, which reflect feminine practice and point to female submission. The cultural practice of veiling is consistent with the natural order of things that seek to make a clear distinction between men and women. Since this is true the Corinthians should be able to discern for themselves concerning the veiling issue. They should not need an apostle or divine revelation to let them know about this practice of women veiling.

Since veiling in Corinth was the clear sign of headship and submission it was necessary for the Christian women of Corinth to veil. It would be proper and fitting for them to veil since the local custom recognized this customary practice and sign of female submission and modesty. However, the fact that these believers could “judge” for themselves indicates that the veiling practice was linked to a local custom, which reflected femininity and submissiveness, and not to the actual Genesis law. In other words, Paul is saying, “Use you’re own common sense for a moment. Is there a collective opinion in your local community regarding veiling and what is right, normal, feminine, and modest? If you know the answer to this question you will also know the answer to Christian women veiling in your community.”

Today a woman is not open to suspicion of her moral character if she does not veil. The failure to wear a shawl or veil is only disgraceful when it’s interpreted as being disgraceful in a cultural setting. If it is not disgraceful then it is another matter. She is free to not veil. But where it is disgraceful she must submit to custom. This is the overall teaching of the passage. Paul is simply saying that there is an *application requirement* to the Genesis principle in every local custom. If the custom requires women to veil, then have them veil. If there are no customary practices, then it’s also fitting and proper for them not to veil. The local Christian custom in Corinth reflected the divine principle but this is not the case in every country and community. Therefore, it’s necessary to “judge” (vs. 13) whether or

not women veiling is a cultural application and requirement because of the Genesis principle of headship and submission.

Today in our country it is not a customary practice for women to veil. Their failure to veil does not reflect their rebellion against God's ordered design, since this is not a customary practice, nor does their failure to veil suggest they are a temple prostitute, immodest, and unfaithful to their husbands. Paul says each culture and community must judge for themselves what is right for them. Therefore, veiling is not a command for all New Testament churches ("judge in yourselves").

3. Paul was stating the transferable principle (1 Cor. 11:15).

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering." Unless one sees that *two* coverings are mentioned in this chapter, the passage becomes hopelessly confusing. This verse clearly tells us that another covering was in Paul's mind other than the artificial veil. Those who study this passage of Scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter eleven usually come to one of four conclusions. First, some suggest that Paul is commanding women to wear veils or shawls in all the churches for all times. There is no custom involved. Second, others suggest that since women today do not normally wear veils then Paul is saying that women of all time should wear something similar to a veil, such as a hat or prayer shawl when worshipping God. They claim this is his main point.

It may be true that when women wear hats to church today some may truly want to express their submission to their husband while others may simply be trying to look fashionable. Third, some suggest that since the local custom of the veil is obvious there is no relevance of this passage to our times. Of course, this is false since Paul takes us back to the creative order of Genesis to teach the principle of headship and submission (1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9). The matter of submission and obedience to headship is transferable to all future generations for it is based on the Genesis arrangement. Fourth, the best option in understanding the veiling of women is to see that Paul was stating the *transferable principle* of headship and submission.

Paul was not transferring the custom of veiling to our times. Rather, he was transferring the creative truth or principle of headship and submission for our day and time. This is obvious for he does not continue to argue for women veiling since this was not part of the original Genesis arrangement. Rather, he sends forth a different message as he concludes the section, as we will see in a final point. Basically, the woman's hair is given to her as a natural veil (literally "instead of a covering" – vs. 15).

This adds weight to Paul's original thoughts concerning the Genesis arrangement of male authority and female submission (vs. 3), which is the main thrust behind the veiling passage. The woman can maintain her hair (the natural veil) at a sufficient length and this will serve the purpose of the artificial veil. The natural instincts or intuitive understanding built into mankind (natural law) would reveal to the human race that men should look like men and women should look like women. The word "nature" (vs. 14) is the same word used for the intuitive knowledge that God has placed within mankind (Rom. 1:26). So Paul says the artificial veil is customary but God gives to women a natural veil that she is to maintain and keep on her head. It's her natural God-given hair and this in itself becomes a beautiful sign of her submission to male headship in the home and local church setting. The natural intuitive instincts built into the human race (Rom. 1:19) regarding male and female distinction should confirm to everyone of the major distinction among the sexes.

I once read a pamphlet that condemned women for having open, loose, and flowing hair in public. He suggested that the Bible in 1 Corinthians 11:6 is teaching that women of all time in all churches are not to wear long flowing hair in public. They are commanded to wear a shawl or veil in public, or at least in church, and this necessitates the practice of piling up their hair on top of their heads in a bun, so their long hair is not noticed in public gatherings. I thought to myself why the writer of this pamphlet came to this conclusion. He *assumed* that Paul was teaching this in verse six but there is absolutely no evidence that this is what Paul is teaching.

The evidence is exactly the opposite in the context. Paul was teaching about women veiling in this verse. To argue that long flowing hair is shamefully wrong for a woman, and base it on 1 Corinthians

11:6, is to miss the entire point that Paul is trying to make (1 Cor. 11:15). He was actually saying it's wrong, indecent, and unfeminine for a woman to shave her head. Nothing is said about her long hair! Paul actually says that a woman's long hair is her glory (effeminate beauty) and not her disgrace (vs. 15). Paul was for long hair instead of short hair and any man who follows nature will agree with Paul. More on this later.

For now, we must see that Paul was transferring the truth about male headship and female submission to all ladies in all churches for all times by arguing that God wants women to be effeminately marked with a natural covering on her head, which is her hair. Her ample covering of hair sets forth the Genesis arrangement of headship and submission and becomes the lasting and enduring sign of God's creative order. So in verse 15 Paul was taking us from the custom in Corinth to the Creator's arrangement in Genesis. A woman's long flowing hair, or a woman's hair length which is noticeably different than a man's, is to be her natural God-given veil to teach the principle of female submission to male authority.

Now let me state something very clearly. It's not wrong to veil nor is it wrong to refuse to veil. It all depends on your local custom and community. This is what Paul is saying ("Judge in yourselves" - vs. 13). I know many women who find veiling a beautiful expression of their submission and loyalty to their husbands. It is practiced in their fellowships and seen as a proper symbol of submission. However, I also know many other women who choose not to veil since the practice or custom is not officially established in our country, their church fellowship, nor does refusing to veil have the same connotation and overtones it had in Corinth. Dearly beloved, we must "judge" for ourselves whether or not this practice is appropriate. But one thing is for sure. *We should not look down upon a Christian woman who refuses to veil since God has given her a natural expression of her submission to headship and authority.* It is the beauty of her hair.

So how can we apply the customary practice of veiling to the churches of today? Here are some thoughts. If a church fellowship requires veiling, then one must decide whether or not they want to remain in that fellowship and follow the practice (Rom. 14:19-20).

However, if one chooses to withdraw from a certain fellowship and the practice of veiling they should not be looked down upon (2 Cor. 10:12) since veiling is not a universal command given to all churches for all time. Rather, the women must maintain the God-given sign of submission to headship and authority which is to maintain a hair length that is not only becoming to a woman but expresses her desire to submit to male authority in the home and local church setting with pastors and men have leadership roles.

We do know that some women still practice wearing certain types of veils out of a sincere heart and there is absolutely nothing wrong with the outward expression. However, it is an issue that should not become divisive in any church where some women choose to veil and others do not. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). What needs to be impressed upon the congregation and adhered to without compromise (1 Cor. 11:16) is the Genesis arrangement of headship and submission.

I believe that dress is largely cultural. Therefore, unless a person wears something immodest or sexually suggestive, it should have no moral or spiritual significance. Unless someone wants to be irreverent and pagan in their dress there is no spiritual significance attached to their dress. Unless someone wants to openly discourage another brother or sister in the Lord with their manner of dress (Rom. 14:19-21) or defy clear sexual distinctions in their overall manner of dress (Deut. 22:5) there is no spiritual importance attached to it. For instance, throughout Biblical times, as in many parts of the world today, both men and women wore some type of robe. But even though there were similarities there always were some clear distinctions of dress and appearance between men and women, most often indicated by hair length, head coverings, and general appearance of color in apparel and other outward markings.

In summary, it is the principle of women's subordination to men that Paul is enforcing for all churches for all times, *not the particular mark or symbol* of that subordination. The apostle is not laying down a universal principle that Christian women should always worship with their heads covered. Rather, in going back to the beginning he was suggesting that women follow their local customs that distinguish between the sexes and keep the distinction clear enough that there

can be no question about a person's desire and intent. The whole of New Testament Scriptures should be the test for whether or not a woman is obligated to wear a headdress, and not some isolated passage taken by itself.

The interpretive principle is this; if any portion or passage of Scripture seems unclear it should be interpreted by that which is clear and definite. Since the rest of the New Testament is silent on Christian women veiling and since Paul clearly says a woman's hair is an ample sign for her covering (1 Cor. 11:15), the conclusion must be drawn that women in all churches and succeeding church generations must not wear veils or a head covering.

A mother's almost 6-year-old daughter was the flower girl for a wedding. The mother said, "We realized she must have paid close attention to the ceremony when she asked a few days later," "Mom, what did the pastor mean when he said, 'I unite you in holy macaroni'?"

3. The case for male leadership – 7-10

Ladies, why does God want you to be submissive to your husband's headship or authority? Why does God want you to honor and follow male authority or headship in the home and local church? We are going to see this in the next verses. In short, it's because man was given the authority to be the leader in the home and church. In verses 7-10 Paul is going to give some fundamental reasons why the man should not be covered with a veil when he worships. He sets forth a case by going back to Genesis. There can be no arguments against this case. When all is said and done God's creative purpose stands! It wins the arguments of the feminists, the gender benders, the liberals, and the godless home wreckers of our own age. The way God started it is the way it still is today. Case closed!

When a man would cover his head with a veil in Corinth it was demonstrating defiance against God's Genesis order (male leadership – vs. 3) since in Corinth submissive women veiled and the men as leaders did not veil. The veiling of women signified that men were to lead and women were to be submissive. However, if a man decided to veil it was a sign that he was upsetting God's order and

did not want to follow the prescribed pattern of Genesis. Paul is going to remind the men that they were made to be leaders in the homes and churches and therefore should not confuse the local customs of Corinth, which reflected the divine order of Genesis. A man veiling was a sign that he was not supportive or interested in following God's plan for his life which was to become a spiritual leader under the authority of Jesus Christ.

The reason a man should not veil in Corinth was because he was to reflect his God-given role of leadership. A veiled man would not represent this. It would send a confusing message of His role in the marriage and church. So a man who was not veiled was a reminder that he was in charge and a woman should be submissive to him in the home and in church ministry where men were to have the authority over women. A man in Corinth should never veil his head since he is to represent the leader over the woman. The case for male leadership is then given.

The case for male leadership is four-fold:

a. Because the woman compliments the man (glory) – vs. 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.”

Since the woman was created to compliment the man it demonstrates that man is to be the leader over the woman. It's important to see that Paul reasons from creation, not from the fall, when considering the leadership role of the man. Paul takes us back to the beginning and the way God established marriage to be in creation. In this verse Paul is not denying that a woman is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Paul was referring to the creation account and he was well aware of what it said. Both male and female were created in God's image and likeness.

Some authors have concluded by this verse that the woman was created in the man's image but this is false and not according to the Biblical record. However, the woman's image was in some sense *indirectly derived* from the man since she was created from the man (vs. 8). Furthermore, the Bible does teach that man was created in

God's image ("he is the image and glory of God" – vs. 7) in a way that the woman was not. Man was created by God to be a ruler. He was given a sphere of sovereignty the woman did not have. *So the man was created to represent God in authority and rulership.* Man was created to reflect God's image in this special way. Since man is created in God's image to represent His authority and rulership he is also said to be "the glory of God" or someone who is to bring great honor and delight to God as he fulfils his God-given responsibility.

The focus in verse seven seems to be on the word "glory." Paul was probably using the word glory to indicate a sense of honor and dignity since the verses before (vv. 4-6) speak of shame and dishonor. Some verses that follow also speak of shame and glory (vv. 14-15) where the word glory clearly indicates a woman's dignity and honor. The contextual evidence supports the idea that the word "glory" points to honor, respect, and even delight. So Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11:7 that man was created in the image of God to reflect God's ruling sovereignty (authority) and this brings great glory (honor and delight) to God Himself who is the original leader. God is honored and delighted that man was created as a ruler to reflect this important aspect of His image or likeness. Thus, man is said to be "the glory of God" in the sense that God Himself finds great honor and delight when man is a leader.

One writer attempts to explain away the natural covering as a replacement for the artificial covering in this way: "God's glory is to be seen alone in the assembly of the saints. In order to do this, the man's head remains uncovered by not having long hair and by removing any head covering, because the man is the image and glory of God (I Corinthians 11:7). Any covering on the man would veil God's glory. The women, however, are the stewards of the coverings. There are two competing glories in the church. "The woman is the glory of man" (I Corinthians 11:7) and "If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her" (I Corinthians 11:15). Because there are two symbolic glories to be covered, there must be two coverings. The first head covering, Greek (*peribolaion*), is the woman's long hair (verse 15) to hide the glory of the man. The second head covering, Greek (*katakalypto*), is to hide her glory, which is her own hair. In this way, God's authority is declared in the church. By it the men are reminded that, in their

ministry, their glory is to be hidden. The angels are also instructed by it (I Corinthians 11:10).”

The problem with this summary on the veiling question is that the woman can still reflect the man’s glory (as a leader) by wearing her hair longer (vs. 15). Furthermore, nothing in these verses speaks about competing glories between God and men. The man reflects God’s glory and gives Him glory (7a) when he leads (represented by having no head covering and short hair) and the woman reflects the man’s glory as a leader (7b) when she submits (represented by veiling herself, either by an artificial or natural head covering). There is no mention of competing glories in these verses. The natural glory or dignity that is given to a man for being a leader does not overtake or diminish God’s glory in any fashion (1 Cor. 1:31). Likewise, even though the woman’s hair length is her glory and this glory replaces her artificial covering it does not diffuse the glory of God. Just the opposite is true; God gets all the glory because His order of headship and submission are being followed in both the home and church.

Ladies, this teaching on headship should cause you to get behind your man in the household and marriage. It should be a spiritual boost for all of us to follow God’s ordained blueprint for the home and marriage. We want God to be honored and delighted in what we are doing in the home and how we are living. Many times we can bring God shame and disgrace by the way the order is reversed in the home. The hen is chasing the rooster around in the chicken coop and the woman is leading the man around on a leash. Many women today want to have the reins of family life instead of allowing the man to be a true spiritual leader in the home.

Paul goes on to say, “but the woman is the glory of the man” (vs. 7). The Bible says she was to be a complementary helper to man and assist him in fulfilling his role of leadership. When she does this (places herself under his leadership) the woman actually brings glory to the man (“the glory of the man”). The teaching is very clear. When a woman helps a man to fulfill his obligation to be leader this results in expressing man’s honor and dignity as he fulfills God’s creative obligation for himself as a leader. Male leadership is very important in the family unit. You see, man brings honor and delight to God when he is ruling like God and the woman brings honor and delight to the

man when she submissively follows His leading and direction. *When a wife knows her place of subordination she will bring honor and dignity to the man and to God's purpose for marriage.*

Ladies, when you are constantly trying to usurp the man's leadership position and get in the way of male leadership, it's then that you take something away from the dignity of man and his masculinity. You scale down the dignity and honor that man is to portray as a woman stands behind him and supports his God-given leadership role. When a man cannot be a leader in the home due to a hen that has flown the chicken coop, it's then that man's very purpose on earth and his existence for living is seriously marred. It's then that he is stripped of his true masculinity. Let a man be a man; the way God created him.

While browsing in a Christian bookstore one day, a man discovered a shelf of "reduced price" items. Among the gifts was a little figurine of a man and woman, their heads lovingly tilted toward one another. "Happy 10th Anniversary" read the inscription. It appeared to be in perfect condition, yet its tag indicated "damaged." Examining it more closely, the man found another tag underneath and chuckled--"Wife is coming unglued."

This is true for some women today in the home and marriage. Some women have become unglued from God's original purpose and intent for them. The woman must remember that God has placed her under the man and that she must allow him to operate in his God-given sphere and role as leader. An unglued woman in the home becomes a thorn in the side for every man and a problem in the church.

b. Because the woman comes from the man – (source) – vs. 8

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." The next points may describe the reasons why the woman brings glory to the man or honor and delight to the man's position as leader. However, it is more likely looking back to why the man should not veil. It's because he is the leader. Both options are grammatical possible but the latter is more preferable. Paul is giving another reason for his case for male leadership. Since the woman comes from the man it is easy to conclude that man is to be the leader in the home and church.

Paul reminds us that the man is the source of the woman's existence and put in the context of headship and submission (vs. 3) this must mean that the man is the leader. In other words, since the woman came from the man this gives additional insight regarding man's place of headship and authority over the woman. Once again Paul's reason for headship or male authority and leadership in the home comes from creation and not the fall. The man was the woman's source. It's possible that the city of Corinth and Ephesus were prompting the emerging philosophy which taught that the woman was created before the man and that she was superior to her male counterpart. Paul certainly silences this error with what he says here and elsewhere (1 Tim. 2:13).

Instead of thinking in a contemporary way, as the feminists do, concerning the man being the source of the woman, we must think in the Biblical way. Paul is saying that since the man is the woman's source she is naturally to be submissive to him. It not only makes common sense but Biblical sense. The female sex did not originally produce the male sex, but the first woman came from the first man. God formed Eve out of a part of Adam whom He created first (Gen. 2:21-22). For this simple reason man should be the leader and head (authority) of the home and church. Genesis 2:21-22 presents a beautiful picture. The woman is taken out of the man and then brought to the man (Gen. 2:22).

This means that man is the leader and when Eve was brought to Adam she had no doubt in her mind who was in charge! As a wife today you too should have no doubts about the man's role and your role to him. If you want to be the kind of woman that God originally designed you to be, then learn to place yourself under your man and become his helper instead of his hindrance. You are created to help him fulfill his God-given directives in life in any way that you can. As we will see in our next point Paul says the woman is "for the man" (1 Cor. 11:9).

c. Because the woman was created for the man (helper) – vs. 9

"Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Here is yet another case for male headship (authority) or

leadership. It's because the woman was created and designed to help the man (Gen. 2:18). She was created "for the man. Ladies, are you really for your man? She was given the very name "woman" because she was taken out of man (Gen. 2:23) and was to be the man's helper. Someone who follows after and is created to help and assist a person cannot be the leader of that person or authority figure. Paul reasons this way elsewhere (1 Tim. 2:11–13).

If a young man begins a new job and wants to start bossing the foreman around there is going to be fireworks on the job. It just doesn't work this way in real life. The obvious point is this. The woman was not designed to rule in the stead or place of man but was created to carry out man's will who is her head (vs. 3), just as man was created as the leader of the family unit to carry out Christ's will who is his head (vs. 3). The reason man needs to follow his head (Christ) is because he cannot be the kind of spiritual leader that God wants without submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You can't be a godly man in the home or marriage without placing yourself under your head Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:24).

It's interesting that the woman was brought to the man (Gen. 2:22) that she might be for him. She is to be *for* her husband as Paul said (1 Cor. 11:9); she is *behind* him, *backing* him up; she is *supportive* of him; she wants him to succeed and she is deeply involved in this process. She is there for him in every way she can be and finding great delight in doing whatever she can for her man.

Ladies, stand by your man! Get behind your man! This is the beauty of marriage. This is the way a woman is man's helper. She is there to help man follow his God-given directives for his life. She is there to assist the man to fulfill his obligations to God. *Many a wife leads a double life – hers and his.* This is not Biblical or according to God's creative purpose for the wife. Someone wrote: "Some men achieve distinction by the kind of car they drive – others by the kind of wife that is driving them." Men, did you know the best time to do the dishes is right after your wife tells you! Seriously, we need to learn God's roles and put them into practice or else our marriages will suffer from not following God's creative design.

The woman was brought to the man in order to be his helper. She is to be “for the man (1 Cor. 11:9). Men, we need help! We can’t possibly pack four lunches, change diapers, and do three loads of wash at the same time. We need help. Actually, we need a mental, physical, and spiritual helper who is on our level. The description of her as a “help meet” (Gen. 2:18) means “a helper corresponding to man.” This means that the woman shared the same nature of the man, which was unlike the animal and plant kingdoms. A man may enjoy a form of companionship with a dog, but only on the dog’s level. A man may keep a monkey in a cage and enjoy his monkey company but it’s not the same as the company of a woman. With a wife, a man finds companionship on his own level for she is his equally created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). So the woman was taken from man (Gen. 2:21) so she could be like man in his original creation (Gen. 2:7).

We can be sure that the woman corresponded to the man. Eve possessed a beauty to Adam’s eyes unlike any of the animals or plants that he had ever seen. Any woman today who is beautiful inherited it originally from mother Eve. There is no beauty that women have today that Eve did not have. She was the queen of all beauty. She was a doll from the word “get go” as we say and she was the other half of Adam. She was his counterpart. Now if man is to achieve his objectives in life, he needs the help of his mate or counterpart in every way. Since she is man’s counterpart (created in his likeness), she is the kind of help that man needs, since she is able to identify with him on a mental, physical, and spiritual level of existence. Because this is true she can meet the man’s needs for love, companionship, and fellowship. She can also assist him in serving the Lord and following God’s purpose for his life. Of all the home remedies that have been given to mankind, a good wife is still the best!

This is why the woman could be such a perfect *helper* to man. She could be the perfect compliment and counterpart to man and assist him in fulfilling his creative purpose as leader and head of the family unit. This does not mean she challenges the man’s leadership position but compliments it. She does this not only by submitting to him but also helping him in any and every way that she can to

accomplish his spiritual goals and objectives. She is given her submissive sphere of ministry that is designed to back up and enhance the man's leadership position.

This is what marriage is all about. It's a woman helping a man to achieve God's goals and objectives for his life. This is why she was taken from man (Gen. 2:21). This is why she was brought to the man (Gen. 2:22). She is there to assist him in life. She was created for the man (1 Cor. 11:9) to meet his needs of companionship and assist him in his work and spiritual goals. None of the animals could ever meet man's needs of love, companionship, and fellowship. Nor could they assist and support Adam in following God's will. Christian ladies, if you are married, God will hold you responsible to be an asset to your husband. Proverbs 31:12 states: "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Matthew Henry used to say that God didn't take the woman from the head of Adam to be his superior, or from his foot to be his inferior, but He took her from his side to be equal with him, to be along with him. Someone else added: "Woman was taken not from Adam's head to dominate him, nor from his feet to be trodden down, but from under his arm to be protected, and from near his heart to be loved." How very true!

There is a beauty that should be evident in every wedding. When a man and a woman stand together to be married, the marriage ceremony has for centuries recognized that she is giving herself to him. She is giving herself to him as she holds his arm and clings to him in the front of the aisle. The man is responsible to cherish his wife as the most valuable gift that God has given to him and to protect this gift and guard it. But the woman is basically saying to her man those beautiful words in the book of Ruth, "for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Now, if you do not want to do that, then do not get married because that is what marriage means.

This is what marriage is all about. It's about a woman giving herself away to a man and selling out for him. God brings her to the man and she says, "I'll follow this man and be his helper in every way to achieve God's purpose for his life. This is because the man's purpose

now becomes my purpose in life. I will uphold this work and do everything I can to help this man succeed in doing the will of God.” That is marriage! It’s nothing more or nothing less. May all of the feminists get in the back seat of the bus and let marriage be marriage the way God designed it to be.

d. Because the woman has angels watching her serve the man
(example) – vs. 10

This verse gives the reason (“For this cause”) why the woman is to be submissive to the man. Since the woman was created for the man or for the purpose of helping him fulfill his God-given leadership role, the woman should have “power” on her head. This is referring to the customary veil of Corinth that the woman was to wear as a distinctive dress of her submissiveness to the man. The word “power” (exousia) actually can be translated “authority” and this gives a better sense for understanding the interpretation of this verse. The customary veil that the woman wore in Corinth was a sign of the man’s authority over her. What she wore on her head symbolized that she had an authority figure over her in the home and it also symbolized that she was submissive to male church leadership. The veil served as a customary symbol of submission to another authority figure. Many have been intrigued with the last part of this verse that reads “because of the angels” (vs. 10). What do angels have to do with a woman wearing a veil that symbolized submission?

We do know that the angels of God are all about us. People often think of angels as remaining in Heaven and only coming to earth on rare occasions to bring some message. But that is not true (Heb. 1:13,14). We do know that angels are spectators of the church (1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:21). Angels come to church with us! Angels are watching you and me worship and fulfill our God-given duties as Christians. They are interested in the way God’s people are serving the Lord and worshiping the Lord. They are especially interested in submissive behavior since they are creatures of submission.

The elect or good angels are servants of the Most High God. Angels submit to God’s leadership and perform His will (Psalm 103:20; 104:4; Gen. 28:12). Angels are examples of *creaturely subordination*

to God and when they see rebellious women in the church or home they *take offence* to such actions. For this reason, the Corinthian women needed to wear a head covering in the church assembly. Angels view what is taking place among women in the marriage relationship and church ministry in regards to their submissive behavior.

Since Paul was arguing from the facts of Creation he brings up the angels since they too are created beings that have learned submission from their original creation. As a woman was created to be submissive to a man so angels were created to be submissive to God. Therefore, submission is very important to angels. They are watching women in the context of the home life and church ministry to see if they are fulfilling their God-given role of submission. They are watching to see if women are fulfilling their submissive role as God intended from the Genesis creation. The point seems to be this. The women of Corinth needed to cover themselves because good angels are an example of subordination and would take offense if they viewed insubordinate women who claimed to be serving God. Angels are supposed to learn from the church but they will learn nothing about submission if God's women are not following the Biblical mandate that God has called them to uphold.

Another possible reason for wives submitting to their husbands and women submitting to church leadership is because angels can also be tempted to rebel as they did in the beginning (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:4). Therefore, when they see women rebelling against authority they too may be tempted to rebel against God's authority. Because of the angels, every woman should wear a veil in Corinth, or as we will see later, wear their hair long (long hair being the veil replacement) and be careful that she does not have a rebellious heart lest she should become a stumbling block and curse to the angels of God.

Ladies, have you offended the angels this week? Have you tempted them this week? When your husband wanted to come to church and you said no do you realize that the angels were offended and perhaps put to the test of temptation to rebel against their own authority? When your husband had to make a final decision and you defied that decision you did not only in front of the children but also the angels. Instead of seeing submission the angels have seen

rebellion in a woman who was created to be submissive to her husband and God's design.

Ladies, when you want to flare up and become an authority in the local church or home the angels become offended for they witness a woman who is God's child behaving in a way that frustrates God's purpose for submission. It seems that the women preachers of today really don't care whether or not angels are watching them defiantly strut around on a stage preaching in front of men and the entire church? It seems that they could care less about the angels when they try and run the home instead of allowing the man to demonstrate his masculinity and lead as God created him to do. The angels are watching us all the time.

Ladies, the angels have a special interest in you since they too must submit to God's leadership. They want to see how you are doing. There are angels in this church service and they are witnessing first hand how the women are conducting themselves. There are angels in your home witnessing how you are conducting yourself as a wife. We don't see them or hear them. But they are here in the church and in the home watching us worship and live out our lives in accordance with God's will. What do they see? What is their reaction to our worship and everyday living? Angels are also interested in the things related to salvation such as the Gospel, grace, and the glory of redemption since they don't know what it's like to be saved by grace or redeemed (1 Pet. 1:10, 12).

Angels are in the Gospel preaching meetings of today. They are listening to the Gospel messages being given by the preachers of the church assemblies and they wonder what it's like to experience salvation and redemption. The angels hear us sing, "Just as I Am"; "Redeemed How I love to Proclaim It"; and "Jesus Saves" and with great interest, amazement, and wonder they try and contemplate what it's like to be saved. In fact, when someone does get saved they break forth in praise for Jesus said in Luke 15:10 "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Angels are not only interested in how we live but how we are saved and what it's like to experience God's wonder, grace, and salvation.

During a long and losing baseball game, the restless 12-year-old players were questioning Ritchie, their assistant coach, about his attractive younger sister. Annoyed at the idle chatter, the head coach hollered, "When you're in the dugout, talk baseball!" After a moment's silence, a young voice began, "So, Ritchie, does your sister play baseball?" There is something that God has placed within a man to want female friendship. We have been talking about the Genesis creative order that God has placed within the marriage relationship concerning male leadership (headship) and female submission (1 Cor. 11:3). It is true that the man is the head of the wife in that He was created to be a leader and express the image and glory (delight) of God in this way (vs. 7). Man is indeed created by God to be the head of the family unit and the leader. But lest headship goes to the man's head Paul makes some clarifying statements.

4. The cautionary consideration – 11-12

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God."

Ladies, aren't you glad that Paul said, "Nevertheless?" Paul gives the other side of the truth here. There is a cautionary statement given to remind men that their leadership and headship position should not go to their head. Satan will try and get men to misinterpret God's Word and carry it to extremes the Lord did not intend. Lest men abuse their authority over women, or the headship teaching, Paul reminds them of their equality and mutual dependence in these verses. *Male chauvinism is no more biblical than feminism. Both are perversions of God's plan.* And when a man allows his leadership position to go to his head there is going to be problems in the marriage. This is a cautionary reminder to the men. God has never intended women to be slaves to men either in the church or in the home and for the most part the salvation of men and the church movement had liberated women from oppressive treatment.

One writer explained:

"Far from oppressing women, the church has been their greatest liberator. In Greek and Roman societies most women were little more than slaves, the possessions of their husbands, who often virtually

bought and traded their wives at will. It was largely because of this inhumane treatment of women that feminism became so popular in the Roman Empire. In many Jewish communities the woman's situation was not much better. Divorce had become easy and commonplace, but it was almost entirely the prerogative of the man. Some Jewish men held women in such low esteem that they developed a popular prayer in which they thanked God that they were not born a slave, a Gentile, or a woman."

This being said, men needed a cautionary reminder to counteract the cultural mistreatment of women. In short, they need to be brought down to their own size and remember that both the man and the woman function together in a marriage relationship. There is a mutual sharing and interdependence on each other that is needed for any marriage to function in harmony. So what Paul states here is done to balance what was just stated about male authority and headship and as Vine states, "to prevent a wrong value from being attributed to woman in the divine relationship, as if she were the inferior." Man has no right to look down on his woman for she is his equal in every way. The functional differences in marriage do not destroy spiritual and physical equality. Paul cautions about two matters:

1. Don't forget about spiritual equality (vs. 11).

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." We know Paul is talking about *spiritual equality* in this verse with the phrase "in the Lord." Both sexes must admit their spiritual oneness or equal standing before God in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28). Both a man and wife share the same spiritual existence together in Christ and the same spiritual blessings in Christ. This is because they are on the same spiritual plain before God. The expression "in the Lord" may also have the sense of living *according to the will and purpose of the Lord*. If this is the case the two marriage partners will also share the same goal to serve the Lord faithfully and do His will. Together they share the same spiritual standing and desires.

For these reasons they should understand that they live together on an equal spiritual plain. *This means the two should never live*

independent of each other since they are two people spiritually linked together in Jesus Christ. They should serve each other and serve together in the work of the Lord as spiritual equals. They are a spiritual team and because of this men and women are to live together in marriage in mutual interdependence meeting each other's needs by providing help, strength, and encouragement to one another ("neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man").

It's obvious that this verse was given to remind men that a woman is to be his loving spiritual companion and he is to treat her with dignity and respect. Even though the woman initially came from the man and she is to be submissive to his leadership, the man must remember that he is not to live unto himself but for his wife. *Marriage is a spiritual partnership.* The man must realize that he does not live on an island all by himself and the woman must remember the same thing. Both are naturally dependent on one another. They are to be for each other, backing each other up in life, helping one another, serving one another, and reaching out to one another. 1 Corinthians 7:33 says that the husband should always seek to live in such a way to "please *his* wife" and 1 Corinthians 7:34 speaks about the woman living to "please *her* husband." This is the mutual love and reaching out to one another in a marriage relationship that must be maintained (Eph. 5:21). There is *partnership* as well as headship in God's creation that must be maintained.

2. Don't forget about physical equality (vs. 12).

"For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God." Verse 12 confirms what has just been said in verse 11 about spiritual equality, but now Paul argues about *physical equality* from the facts of the original creation and from natural birth. In essence, Paul says that originally the woman came from the man ("For as the woman *is* of the man") but since that first creation account man has come from the woman ("even so *is* the man also by the woman"). *The woman needs the man to begin her existence and the man needs the woman to continue his existence.*

For this reason, there is also a shared physical equality among the sexes. Even though God created Eve from Adam, now every male

comes from a female. At least this is the way it was the last time I checked! This fact stated in verse eleven further illustrates male and female interdependence and balances Paul's emphasis on headship. *Headship does not mean that partnership and interdependence are lost in the marriage.* Absolutely not! Since both share a physical existence there should also be a sharing in the marriage relationship.

These verses then teach that the sexes are on the same level both physically and spiritually and for this reason they should also live interdependent and serve one another in a loving shared relationship. Neither man nor woman has any claim to special status and this alone tells us that men and women need each other. Let me state it clearly. It is nonsense for either men or women to talk about liberation. The man needs the woman, and the woman needs the man. Self-centered individuality destroys unity in marriage. If you are married, you need your husband or wife. Your spouse is necessary for you to be a well-rounded person. We need one another in the marriage relationship and the idea of subordination is not at all in conflict with the idea of mutual interdependence.

Paul concluded by saying "but all things of God" (vs. 12) and he means that all things originate from God. God is both the source of the spiritual and physical lives of men and women. Furthermore, God is the source of the way marriage is to function. He calls the shots; we don't! His counsels, His ordinances, and His actions are absolute truth. This statement occurs elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 5:18 where it speaks of the believer's new birth. All things are from God. God is the Author, source and originator of everything. This is true of the marriage relationship and the laws He has laid down for marriage and when God lays down the laws we should listen. Marriage is not a one-way street. Both sexes are interdependent and work together with love and understanding.

A sign in a Florida flower shop read: "Bring flowers home to your wife. She must be mad at you for something." Someone else said: "There would be a lot more happy marriages if men tried to understand their wives and wives tried to understand football." Did you know that there is a new organization called "Wives Anonymous?" You phone them and they will send someone over to talk your husband out of watching football on Sunday afternoons!

5. The concise summary – 13-15

In these concluding verses Paul is now summarizing his main reasons for Christian women to follow the cultural expression of veiling in Corinth. We must recall that Paul was only concerned about Christian women veiling in Corinth because of the message they sent to people in that culture. We must also remember that Paul is dealing with a social issue in relationship to God's unchanging spiritual order and design as stated in Genesis (1 Cor. 11: 3, 7-9). The backdrop of the cultural expression is creation and the establishment of headship and submission by God's creative design. So when summarizing the entire teaching about veiling in Corinth Paul once again goes back to the beginning and even the natural instincts that God has placed within men and women about masculinity and femininity. So let's state Paul's closing argument in this way.

Veiling in Corinth is proper for several reasons:

1. It was a cultural sign that portrays femininity and submission (vs. 13).

We have already dealt with one aspect of what Paul was saying in this verse. When he says, "Judge for yourselves" concerning the right and wrong of a Christian woman veiling he was appealing to local custom. For the Corinthian's society it was mandatory that the Corinthian women veil because of the message they sent to people in that culture of subordination and compliance to God's Genesis order. The veil was the token of her subjection. Also, a woman who was not veiled was suspect to being immoral.

Veiling in Corinth was a sign of femininity and submission in the same way a woman's natural hair is a sign of femininity and submission (vs. 15). The symbolic expression of wearing a veil portrayed the same thing a woman's hair does. So in the culture of Corinth veiling was very important as it portrayed the sign of subordination to male authority and female distinctiveness or femininity. To abandon the symbol would not be appropriate for Christian women as we have seen (vs. 5). But this is not the case in all cultures and in all churches of today.

The fact that the Corinthian church could “judge” (vs. 13) whether or not veiling was right for their locality is also an indicator that churches today which are distant from the Corinthian culture can also “judge” or use common sense when it comes to answering this question about Christian women veiling. If a culture like the western culture no longer practices veiling as a distinctive sign of subordination, then one does not need to veil. A local church can determine whether or not veiling is appropriate to their local custom and times.

The fact that Paul said the church could “judge” the appropriateness or inappropriateness regarding veiling, based upon their local situation, is an important key that lets us know Paul was not mandating that the women in all churches for all future church generations must wear veils. Personal judgment is necessary. In other words, there should be no reason for an apostle or apostolic command to be made regarding the practice of veiling in any local custom. Each church should be able to determine for itself whether it’s necessary or unnecessary for Christian women to veil in its local and cultural setting. If culture does not dictate it then one does not have to follow the symbol. But Paul goes a step further and relates the cultural practice of veiling to natural instinct. This is our next point.

2. It was a cultural expression that reflects God’s natural law (14-15).

Paul now says the cultural practice of a woman covering her head as a symbol of subordination to man is a reflection of the natural order. Here then is the reason why the Corinthians could “judge” for themselves (vs. 13) whether or not veiling was right for their locality and churches. It’s because of the natural order of things that is stated in verses 14-15. But what is God’s natural order? What does Paul mean by this statement?

The Nature of Things

The word nature (phusis) carries the idea of instinct, an innate sense of what is normal and right or right and wrong in respect to sexuality. Paul is appealing to human consciousness or the intuitive aspect of man’s nature. The same word is used in Romans 1:26-27 in regards to the natural instincts of human sexuality that are placed within all

mankind from creation and birth. Men and women who are involved in homosexuality have exchanged the *natural* function of human sexuality for what is contrary to nature or the natural sexual instinct placed within all people. *In other words, they have violated the God-given innate knowledge of what is right and wrong from a sexual standpoint.* Please note that the homosexual changes what is natural (inwrought by God) and goes against nature or the natural instinct that God has placed within all people (Rom. 1: 26). It is clear that the homosexual exchanges the natural God-given desires related to sexual fulfillment for “unseemly” (vs. 27) or shameful, indecent, and even strange sexual acts (“strange flesh” - Jude vs. 7).

Perhaps this is why homosexuals have been called “queers” meaning people who are strange and odd. Homosexuals don’t like this name but they have actually earned it according to what the Bible says. The Bible gives them this name when it says their sex acts are “unseemly” (vs. 27). Homosexuality is strange or unseemly (not in keeping with God’s standards) and those who practice it are strange and odd not only from God’s perspective but from society’s perspective. If the Bible calls somebody strange, then I will call them strange. Why are homosexuals strange, odd, or queer? It’s because they go against the natural instinct that God has placed within all of mankind. They do not follow the natural God-given sexual desires that are intuitively placed within all human beings. Homosexuality is a violation of the God-given sense of what is right and wrong from a sexual standpoint. God has placed an intuitive or innate sense of His existence within all people (Rom. 1:19), a built-in moral code about human sexuality (Rom. 1:26-27), and the basic tenants of right and wrong (Rom. 2:14).

In Romans 1:26-27 we see there is a sexual sense of what is appropriate or fitting, a sense that God has intuitively implanted within all of us since the time of creation and from our birth. But there is also a natural God-given sense built into all humanity regarding what is masculine and what is feminine. So how does this word study of Roman’s 1:26-27 relate to what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15? It tells us that “nature itself” (1 Cor. 11:14) or the natural order of things that God has established will teach us that long hair on a man is shameful but long hair on a woman is not shameful. *Paul is arguing*

that God has intuitively placed within the entire human race a sense of what is right and wrong in the manner of masculinity and femininity.

Born within the conscious of all humanity is the inner written code of what is feminine and what is masculine. This is especially true in relationship to hair lengths. Everybody knows that a woman should have a full head of hair and the man should have shorter hair (1 Cor. 11:14-15). This is intuitively placed within all of mankind so that there can be a unified sign of submission for all ages and all time.

Paul is then saying that the Corinthians should be able to “judge” (vs. 13) whether or not their women in Corinth should wear veils *on the basic laws of femininity and masculinity which are outlined in the natural order* (vs. 14-15). Does the customary practice of women veiling line up with what is feminine in the natural order of things? If so, then women should veil. Does the veiling of men line up with what is masculine? If not, then men should not veil. *What Paul is doing is getting the Corinthians to evaluate the local custom of veiling by looking at the natural order of things regarding femininity and masculinity.* He is saying that local custom, such a veiling, should demonstrate a difference between the sexes in the same way that “nature” (natural instinct) within all of us makes a distinction between what is feminine and masculine in relationship to hair lengths (vs. 14-15).

If the local custom or practice of veiling does maintain the feminine distinction, as illustrated in the natural order, then it’s proper to veil. In other words, the symbol should not contradict femininity in any way. It should maintain a distinction among the sexes as illustrated by nature and when this is the case then the local practice of veiling is appropriate.

The function of verses 13-15 show that the cultural expression of wearing a head covering by women (vs. 13) must be in accord with the God-given sense that women and men are different, as illustrated by short hair and long hair (vs. 14-15). Since it is universally accepted that short and long hair is a distinctive mark between men and women, which reflects sex and role differences, the cultural practice of veiling should also be accepted as necessary in Corinth. This is because it does not upset the natural order of things or the way God

wanted them to be from creation. It maintains sexual distinction as illustrated in verses 14-15.

Let's state it clearly. Since God has given all human beings a natural sense, or an *instinctive* and *intuitive* understanding placed inside of them by God, regarding the hair lengths of men and women, it also stands to reason that cultural norms should be followed which also convey the natural order of things. This is Paul's key thought for adding verses 14-15 in the discussion.

The natural and inborn understanding in all of us about men and women should cause us to embrace cultural norms, which also mark the sexual distinctions between men and women. In other words, the cultural veiling of Corinth is consistent with nature or the natural instincts placed within mankind, which look at women as being different and distinct from men. Just as a man and woman are to be different in the manner of their hair lengths, so they are to be different according to local custom, which in this case pertains to women wearing veils. Common sense would dictate this. Can't you judge whether or not is right or wrong for a woman to veil based upon the natural order of things?

In other words, if something is culturally feminine (veiling) and comparable to the feminine long hair on women, which we all know is proper by natural instinct (vs. 14), then the expression of veiling should be practiced. Why? It's because it follows the basic law of distinction between men and women, which God has designed to be true in the natural order of things. If something does not represent masculinity in a cultural setting, like a man wearing a veil (vs. 4), then men should refuse to veil and not upset the cultural expression of masculinity. *The one presupposes the other.* The natural should give us a better understanding about the cultural practice. If nature teaches us that there is to be a distinction between the sexes (vss. 14-15) then keep it that way in your local customs (vss. 4-6). Follow the customs that mark the distinctions among the sexes. Don't lose the clear landmarks of sexual distinction.

The application of this to our own day cannot be overlooked. Not only must we obey the natural instincts God has placed within us regarding sexual distinction (vss. 14-15) we should also follow the

local customs that portray masculinity and femininity (vs. 13 with vss. 4-5). *Paul wanted the people to follow the local customs when they portrayed femininity and masculinity.* Local customs and traditional differences between men and women cannot be blurred and readily abandoned without breaking down sexual distinction between men and women. When men start crossing over the line and wearing the same kind of outward adornments as women, such as their clothing and jewelry, then society begins to confuse the sexes from a cultural standpoint and God is not pleased.

For instance, there was a time when men did not wear jewelry around their necks or on their ears for this was considered to be feminine in appearance. Today this distinction is being lost. Likewise, when women want to look like men instead of portraying themselves in a feminine way, it's then that society breaks down the cultural expression of femininity. The point is this. Local custom must be maintained to keep the distinction between men and women clear. Don't become a gender bender in your local society.

What was true in Corinth is also true in our own western society today. Blurring the sexual distinctions by adopting a unisex dress and look becomes the sign that a society is abandoning God's design for femininity and masculinity *but more so it's the telltale sign that society no longer wants to abide by God's creative order of male headship and female submission for this is what the gender differences portrayed (1 Cor. 11:3).* Mark this down. Behind the unisex movement and the loss of cultural distinction among the sexes is Satan's desire to break down God's order in Genesis for marriage, the family, and society. This order is that men are to be leaders under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and women are to be submissive helping men to fulfill their God-given obligation.

Society does not want God's order and the outward display of getting away from this established order is to try and confuse the sexes among society. Unisex looks and a unisex society is a mockery to God's order of male headship under the lordship of Jesus Christ and female submission. When unregenerate men and women look like the opposite sex they begin to spit in God's face and shake their little fists and say, "God, I'll do what I want with my own life. What You say about headship and submission does not matter to me. What You say

about Jesus Christ being Lord of my life does not matter. What You say about submitting to any man does not matter to me. I'll do what I want to do and no one is going to stop me, net even God." This is the mindset of a unisex society without God. How shameful it is when Christians, God's own people, adopt the word's culture (Rom. 12:2) of a unisex look and begin to blur the old landmarks of distinction between male and female. God cannot be pleased when His people begin to follow cultural practices that break down the walls and diminish His goal for sexual distinction.

These marks of sexual distinction portray God's creative order for male headship and female submission. Why do you want to mess with this order? Why do you want to send the message by your unisex look that you don't agree with God's order for men and women as established in Genesis? When a man pushes to look like a woman and a woman pushes to look like a man a message is being sent up to God. It's a message that they defy God's order and design for Biblical manhood and womanhood as created in Genesis. When people try and cross the lines and blur the distinctions it's God's plan and order that they are rebelling against and trying to confuse.

Since sexual distinction must be maintained in the customs of society based upon the natural order of things (vss. 14-15), it certainly must be maintained in the outward display of the lengths of hair on men and women, as God has intuitively taught society. Men, you think of that the next time you want to leave your hair grow long like a woman's hair length or when you want to look like a woman by wearing the same expressions of outward adornment that women wear. Ladies, you think of this the next time you want to chop your hair down to a man's hair length and take away all of your feminine qualities.

Both the cultural and natural instincts inside of us should lead us to look like men and women to look like women. Let's stop playing games with God! Listen folks, if we look like each other we are sending the message that we are not interested in God's order (1 Cor. 11:3) and no longer want to comply with the Genesis arrangement of male leadership and female submission. This is because the distinction among the sexes reflects the spiritual order of Genesis.

Some things are just right the way they are! Leave your hands off of them! This is what God is saying. Stop playing around with God's built-in natural instincts that distinguish the sexes. Furthermore, stop destroying the cultural expressions that represent the natural order of things, those cultural expressions that portray masculinity and femininity. Just leave them alone.

The lessons:

1. God teaches us about sexual distinction intuitively (1 Cor. 11: 14-15).

God had placed within all mankind an intuitive understanding about the feminine portrayal of long hair and the masculine portrayal of shorter hair. Nature or the natural instinct that God has placed within all of humanity teaches us this. No matter what culture we live in this inward lesson is etched upon the constitutional part of man's nature. Therefore, every culture should obey these intuitive distinctions among the sexes. Furthermore, a woman's natural veil or long hair is her mark of sexual distinction and a sufficient token to demonstrate female submission to male headship (1 Cor. 11:14).

2. God teaches us to maintain the customs of sexual distinction carefully (1 Cor. 11:13).

God also expects Christians to carefully follow those local customs within society that portray femininity and masculinity. They should not be abandoned in the name of freedom or liberty. They too must be maintained to convey and portray femininity *in the best possible light*. In Corinth the veil was part of the customary expression of femininity and so it was not to be abandoned. In different parts and cultures of the world the basic principle of headship still applies but the cultural means of demonstrating it differs somewhat from place to place. The important thing is to always obey God's natural laws (vs. 14-15) and then relate customary sexual distinction to these laws in order to further distinguish the sexes (vss. 4-5, 13).

People have asked me over the years, "Pastor, should I cut my hair a little shorter as a man or keep it a little longer as a woman? Should I stop wearing necklaces and earrings as a man since men have not

traditionally worn them and they were a sign of femininity? Should I stop wearing this particular article of clothing?”

The answer to these questions is simple and I usually answer in this way.

1. Counteract culture when necessary.

While wearing head coverings no longer is part of our cultural practice there is an abiding principle in this text that is applicable to the 21st century. In every culture there are certain kinds of adornments, which become culturally acceptable norms of dress for men and women. We should seek to abide by these norms and not overturn the cultural distinctions. In one sense we must follow the cultural distinctions of the sexes and *in another sense we must refuse to follow the culture when it tries to openly and defiantly blur these long established cultural patterns of distinction among the sexes*. As Christians we must counteract the culture that unites the sexes (Romans 12:2). Don't become a gender bender! Don't be so quick to change with cultural expressions when sexual distinction is in question. If it's doubtful (Rom. 14:23) then it's probably breaking down the cultural distinction among the sexes. Don't follow the trends that are distorting the roles of men and women. You might also ask these questions: Is it worn by the opposite sex? What will others think of me when I wear certain adornments? Will it offend others in the work of God (Rom. 14:19-21)?

2. Don't see how close you can get to the line.

Dress and look like a man or woman in the best possible light. Don't remove the old landmarks (Prov. 23:10) and the long established differences between the sexes. Stay within the boundaries and don't walk so close to the edge. You might fall off! When someone looks at you from the back they should be able to tell what you are! When they look at you from the front there should be no doubt that you possess distinguishing marks of sexuality. Don't become a gender bender. Don't follow the trends that are distorting the roles of men and women. Do you look more like a man or more like a woman by the way you dress and look? This is the ultimate question.

Now let me handle the problem of hair with some more specific comments related to Scripture.

1 Corinthians 11:14-15

“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.

There are two lessons we learn from nature as it relates to the hair lengths on men and women.

a. A man’s hair should be short (1 Cor. 11:14).

“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man has long hair, it is a shame to him?” Paul poses a rhetorical question that demands a positive reply. The answer is obvious. When a man looks like a woman he disgraces himself and masculinity. Paul is saying that a man should not abandon the characteristic of natural physiology that marks masculinity. This mark is a man’s shorter hair length. The natural instinct (inclination) that God has built into men tells them that long hair is for women and not for men. They know intuitively that when a man wears long hair it becomes a shame to him.

The word for “shame” (vs. 14) speaks of being disgraceful and dishonoring. When a man wears his hair longer it is disgraceful “unto him” for it displays femininity instead of masculinity and in doing so portrays a reversal of God’s Genesis order that argues for male leadership and female submission (1 Cor. 11:3). A man disgraces himself when he tries to walk the line or cross the line of masculine hair length. I always chuckle when I see men who are bald on the top wearing long hair down their back. We might call them bald hippies! Seriously, a man shames the masculine sex when he tries to act like a woman.

Long Hair or Braided Hair?

The word translated “long hair” (*komao*) means just that – “to let the hair grow, to have long hair (Thayer) or “to wear long hair as part of one’s attire - to have long hair, to appear with long hair, to wear long hair” (Louw and Nida). The lexical studies all approve this rendering.

Some have tried to say that the word for long hair (komao) only means to wear long hair like a woman's long hair and interpret the word this way to leave the door open for men to actually wear their hair long as long as it does not look like a woman's braided hair. They base this finding on the fact that the word for "long hair" (komao) comes from the verb form (kome) that means, "to wear tresses of hair" or braided hair. Therefore, it's assumed that this passage has the meaning that men should not wear long hair – the kind of long hair that looks like a woman's braided or plaited hair.

In other words, some suggest that the command is not against men wearing long hair but hair that looks like a woman's outwardly adorned hair when she arranges it in braids or a plaited fashion. The focus is on the adornment of a man's long hair but not on the actual long hair per say.

This interpretive conclusion is an incredible injustice to what Paul is saying in this context and defrauds God's Word. A person tries to huckster God's Word (2 Cor. 2:17) when they come to these conclusions. It's making Paul convey something that he never intended to convey. First, the actual word "komao" speaks of long hair – not the adornment of the hair. The lexical aids verify this and even classical Greek references. Second, the root word (kome) simply means "the hair of the head" and this word comes from another root word (komidzo) that means tending the hair. Third, one should not override the exact meaning of a word in a text by its root connections.

This is not a good interpretive practice. When a writer uses a derivative of a word he does so for a reason. We should not try and change the meaning and intended purpose of a writer. There is a certain folly in the linguistic reasoning that assumes a word takes on all the meanings of other words related to it in the same passage of Scripture.

If anything, Paul is saying that men are not to have long hair for this is the kind of hair length (long hair) that a woman wears and men should not reflect a woman's hair length in their outward appearance as males. In other words, if a man wears his hair long (like the hair length of a woman) he is trying to look like a woman in his appearance (braids or no braids). As always, some who are trying to

find a needle in a haystack will try anything to approve of men wearing long hair. Braiding or plaiting the hair has nothing to do with Paul's argument. The argument is against men wearing long hair since long hair in itself reflects a woman's feminine appearance.

We might also add that Paul says a woman's hair is given to her for a natural veil (vs. 15). He says nothing about the way she fixes her hair. The length itself signifies her glory. Furthermore, Paul had previously argued about a woman cutting her hair short or shaving her head (vs. 6) as being improper. The context has nothing to do with the ornamentation of a woman's hair length but the actual length of her hair. Furthermore, long hair on men in the Corinthian culture was a sign of male prostitution in the same way short hair was a sign of female prostitution (vs. 6).

There is absolutely no justification for interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:14 to mean long hair was okay for men so long as it does not look feminine in appearance. This defies all Scriptural sense. Long hair on men cannot look anything but feminine! So the context itself rules out the interpretation that Paul was only referring to long hair on a male that resembled the long braided hair on women. Paul says that long hair on men is feminine and it distorts the sexual distinction that God intended to display concerning His design for the sexes and society. For a man to wear his hair long is a sign of rebellion against God's established order for society (male headship and female submission) and the man's outward demonstration that Jesus Christ was to be the head or Lord of his life (1 Cor. 11:3).

Long Hair and Rebellion

We must remember what Paul was doing in this chapter. Paul began by comparing the custom of veiling with the natural order of Genesis (1 Cor. 11:3). The accepted custom of Corinth dictated that when a woman veiled (vs. 5) she was honoring her head (the man – vs. 3) through submission but when the man decided to veil (vs. 4) he would naturally be dishonoring his head (Christ – vs. 3) by reflecting that he does not want to submit to Jesus Christ and allow Christ to be Lord of his life.

Now Paul compares the natural covering to the spiritual order of creation. When a man tries to veil his head with long hair he also dishonors his head (Jesus Christ) by conveying the message that he does not want Jesus Christ to rule his life. The one (the artificial veil) presupposes the other (long hair veil) since Paul was *moving from the custom to the natural order* of things that represented the sexes and God's Genesis order. A man should not veil his head (vs. 7) with an artificial veil for he represents male leadership over the woman and that he is following his head Christ. Similarly, he should not try to veil his head with long hair since he represents male leadership and since he is to express the message that Christ is Lord of his life.

Long hair on men conveys the message of rebellion against God's command for sexual distinction (vs. 14-15), God's order of male headship and female submission (vs. 3), and rebellion against Jesus Christ who is to be the man's leader and Lord of his life (vs. 3). 1 Samuel 15:23 says, "For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry." Men, you think of this the next time you want to keep your hair looking more like a woman than a man. Paul says that if a man wants to look like a woman (a sissy) he would be sending the message that he did not want to follow what God said concerning His order of male leadership and submission to Jesus Christ (vs. 3). From the days of Absalom to our present day, long hair on men has been a mark or sign of rebellion (2 Samuel 14:26).

Today long hair on men not only conveys rebellion to God's natural order of the sexes but rebellion to God's righteous ways. This is because of what long hair has been associated with during the hippie movements of the 60's and 70's and the culture that wanted to smoke drugs, commit so-called free sex and have no godly restraints or restrictions over their lives. Pastor George Parson said: "Therefore, if the radical and rebellious element in our society has identified with long hair on men, then the male believer must not have anything to do with it. This would be true even if there had been no Biblical mandate such as found in 1 Corinthians 11:14."

In other words, Pastor Parsons is reminding us of the principle of association (Eph. 5:11; 1 Cor. 10:20) and conformity to the world's rebellious ways (Rom. 12:2). He concludes by saying: "We want to

clearly and unquestionably avoid any identification with the extreme, radical, worldly and unbiblical movements of our day." In other words, believers should not want to take on the appearance (1 Thess. 5:22) that they are identifying or associating (1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 5:7, 11) with the questionable, extreme, radical, worldly and unbiblical movements within our society such as long hair on men (rebellion in the 60's and 70's) or the rock culture and unisex philosophies in our present day society. These types of things represent rebellion to natural order and rebellion to God and what is righteous, by notoriously promoting things such as lust, sex and drugs. Therefore, it's the believer's responsibility to part from these practices within a pagan and corrupt society (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:14).

In light of the day in which we live the believer should present the least questionable testimony before the world and represent Christianity as a non-rebellious movement of people that are different than the world and its standards, which represent rebellion against God. The whole unisex movement and philosophy of today is continually trying to blur the obvious distinctions among the sexes in dress and overall appearance. The Christian must remain very discerning and seek to maintain a noticeable difference among the shifting sands of cultural change which has no regard for truth, righteousness and the timeless principles that deal with God's moral and ethical codes.

Hairstyles are normally clear statements of a person's intent and heart. Long hair on men and short hair on women are not merely harmless fashions but are statements of rebellion against God's created order (1 Corinthians 11:14,15). The androgynous unisex image is not innocent. It was created by rock musicians who consciously intended to overthrow Biblical order and tradition.

Jerry Rubin, a 60's leader of rebellion, says LONG HAIR is the "mark" of REBELLION: He says, "Young kids identify short hair with authority, discipline, unhappiness, boredom, rigidity, hatred of right, and LONG HAIR with letting it go. . . . Wherever we go, our HAIR tells people where we stand on Viet Nam, Wallace, campus disruption, dope. We are living TV commercials for the revolution. . . . LONG HAIR is the beginning of our liberation from sexual oppression that underlies the whole military society" (Jerry Rubin, Do It).

Long hair has always been a sign of rebellion to God's natural order of things. It was a sign that people did not want any authority over their lives (government or God). It was surely a sign that men did not want Jesus Christ to be Lord of their lives. This message of rebellion was true in Paul's day, it was true in the sixties, and it's still true today. Long hair means only one thing – rebellion. It's a sign of rebellion against God's order of the sexes and all authority. It's also a sign of effeminacy.

Are You a Boy or a Girl?

I'm told that during the "hippie" days there was a rock song with words that went like this. "Are you a boy, or are you a girl? With your long blond hair, you look like a girl." Maybe some of you ex-hippies remember this one. In many Bible-believing churches we could sing these words for they actually support what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11:14. When a boy has long hair he looks like a girl. When a man has long hair he looks like a woman. The opposite would be true for a woman. We would change the song and sing: "Are you a girl, or are you a boy? With your short, short hair, you look like a boy." God wants distinction among the sexes and He makes a clear statement in these texts before us concerning His mind. Now let's not distort what God is saying to approve of our son wearing his hair long or our daughter wearing her hair short like a man's hair length.

Webster defines effeminate like this: having traits, tastes, habits, etc., traditionally considered feminine, as softness or delicacy. Men, do you want to look like a woman? Do you want to be effeminate? Do you want to look like a sissy? When you allow your hair to grow long you begin to blur the distinction among the sexes, push the unisex lifestyle, and send a message of defiance to God's Genesis order of *male leadership that is under the authority of Jesus Christ and female submission*.

How Long is Long?

Of course, the question always surfaces: "How long is long?" The Bible does not give any measurements for how short a man's hair should be but it does teach that there should be a clear and obvious

difference between the length of a man's hair and the length of a woman's hair. Regardless of the day and different styles of change, there should be a clear distinction between the hair length of men and women. *If hair is long enough to resemble the hair of a woman, it is too long. Also, if a woman's hair is short enough to be like the hair of the man it is too short.* The difference in appearance must be short enough to prevent shame to the man and long enough not to prevent shame to the woman. Christian ladies must do their part by keeping their hair reasonably long while men keep their hair reasonably short. To blur this distinction is to defy the orderly arrangement of God's design for male and female. It also dishonors God and does not glorify Him (1 Cor. 11:3, 4, 7).

What about a man's hair length? How long is long? My answer to this question is simple. If you've got to ask, it's too long! One man said, "When I got saved, I had long hair. At that time, my long hair was very important. I mean, very important! I don't believe I would have cut my hair for \$1000! But after a few months of reading my Bible, fellowshiping with the Lord and other Christians — I went to the barber shop and got a haircut! I mean a real haircut that I had not had in many years. It wasn't easy! But I remember coming home and looking in the mirror. I felt wonderful! I felt clean! I can honestly say, that cutting my long hair was one of the greatest victories of my Christian life! I put so much importance on my long hair. After it was cut, I realized how silly and rebellious, I was to let something, like the length of my hair, get me to disobey the Word of God."

You may say, "Pastor, there are more important things to talk about than a man's hair length." Yes, I suppose there are. I could talk about the Gospel and the salvation of souls. But isn't sanctification in our Christian lives also important (1 Thess. 4:4)? You say, "Pastor, I think my heart is right even though my hair length is not. After all, God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Yes, this is true, but God also looks at your head! God also looks at your obedience to His commands and your sanctified manner of living. God is pleased with obedience (1 John 3:22). We are not only to change inwardly but outwardly (2 Cor. 7:1) since this normally reflects the condition of the inward heart.

Peter mentioned the importance about the inner man (1 Pet. 3:4) but at the same time spoke about the outward man (1 Pet. 3:3). This

should tell us that both are important to God and the one (the inner man) will affect the other (the outer man or outward appearance). If you think Christians shouldn't care how people dress and that we should only look at the hearts of people, then you tell that to the young men of today who are faced with all of the harlot dress that is in our country. The manner in which women are dressing today is appalling to God (1 Timothy 2:9). Does a man look at the heart of a harlot or her dress? Believe you me, dress does send a message and ladies you are sending a direct message to men by the way that you dress. Don't you every forget it.

Let me conclude this section. I would agree that the length of one's hair is not as important as many other things, but if it is not important at all, why is it mentioned in the Bible? If something is a sign of submission, a sign of the sexes, and if something concerns the angels, then it must have some importance in the Christian life. The fact of the matter is this; it has great importance. The message of our hair length sends the message of our rebellion or acceptance of God's order for the sexes.

Do You Need a Haircut?

One man tells us why he cut his hair short: He entitled his little article, "WHY I CUT MY LONG WOMANISH HAIR." He said, "Standing on this passage (1 Cor. 11:14), I can say without fear of displeasing the Lord that a woman has no more authority to wear her **hair** short than I have to wear my hair long. In the summer of 1973 I was a long-haired man. I had been in jail, had hitch-hiked more than 6,000 miles across the entire length of America. My hair was long because I was a rebel. When the Lord saved me that summer, I began to have a new attitude! I knew instinctively that my long womanish hair was improper, so I had it cut--but not too short!

"I decided to try a "happy medium," not really long, not really short. I reasoned that I didn't want to "turn off" my old hippie friends I was trying to win to the Lord by causing them to think I had turned COMPLETELY weird. I wanted to remain somewhat fashionable. Is that so unreasonable, I thought. I remained in that condition for a few weeks, then one evening I went soul winning with a brother who was older in the Lord and who was discipling me. We were invited into the

home of an elderly lady in Bartow, Florida (in the center of the state), and the other brother began to witness to her about trusting Jesus Christ as her Savior. She was quiet for a few moments, then turned to me and said, 'I will not listen to you fellows preach the Bible to me when one of you has that old long hair which the Bible forbids.'

"I was momentarily dumb- struck, but regaining my composure, I apologized to the woman and told her that I would go to the barber the very next day and have it cut properly AND UNQUESTIONABLY short. And that is exactly what I did. It was a happy day. No more compromise with the issue. No more "beating around the bush." No more excuse making. No more defensiveness. If I remember correctly, I was less than four months old in the Lord, and I am thankful for the lady's boldness."

Did Jesus Have Long Hair?

I will never forget the time when my wife and I were walking through a development yard sale. I had gone on before her and walked into a garage to look at the items the people were selling. And there He was right before my eyes. It was a large portrait of Jesus staring at me. When I saw my wife I told her that I had seen Jesus at one of the garage sales! Of course, the picture we have of Jesus today is simply an artist's perception of Jesus. This artist painted Jesus as some kind of medieval hippie! But the artist who painted Jesus had no idea what Jesus looked like and the picture that many people have hanging in their homes today is simply not an accurate reflection of what Jesus looked like (Rev. 1:12-16).

I'm glad we don't know what Jesus looked like because if we did man would probably worship pictures of Jesus. However, today many argue that Jesus had long hair but this is simply not true. Those who want to promote long hair on men have always tried to justify their feminine looking hair by claiming that Jesus had long hair. However, this is simply not the true perception of Jesus.

There are several reasons why Jesus did not have long hair. First, early pictures did not show Jesus with long hair. It's interesting that the earliest pictures of Jesus Christ that were found in Roman catacombs did not show Jesus with long hair. Of course, these were

not accurate or precise pictures of Jesus but they do demonstrate that mankind knew that Jesus would never defy God's design for short hair on men. These pictures were also closer to the days of Jesus and would more accurately reflect the styles of the days of Jesus. Second, the custom in the days of the Romans was for men to wear short hair. Philip Vollmer states, "Several pictures of busts of numerous Roman emperors during and after the time of Christ--General Pompey, the Emperor Trajan, Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus and King Herod Agrippa the First of Judaea, a Jew by religion, who ruled shortly after the time of Christ--all show the men to have short hair. These men set the example and the pace for men during the time of Christ" (Philip Vollmer, *The Modern Student's Life of Christ*, pp. 286). From coins, statues, and paintings that depict men in the Greco-Roman world of the first century, we know that men trimmed their hair.

The Jews also followed the custom of short hair on men. *This was an accepted customary practice based upon the ordered distinction that was passed down through the ages of time and it was also the result of the inward natural instinct placed within men (1 Cor. 11:14)*. A man's hair was always to be shorter than a woman's hair length. Third, the artist's conception that Jesus wore long hair was an attempt to make Jesus different from most men. We have already stated that the present day pictures of Jesus are merely an artist's conception of what he thought Jesus would look like. But Jesus would not seek to be physically different in appearance from the Jewish men or the Roman men of his own day and go against God's design for the distinction among the sexes.

So the fact that an artist drew Jesus with long flowing hair like a woman was an attempt to make Jesus stand out from men. Isn't it strange that artist portrayals of the Apostles typically depict them with short hair; whereas their Master looks like an effeminate hippy? It is more than strange; it is ungodly! During Jesus' day and thereafter it was considered so much a mark of effeminacy for men to wear long hair that it was not only ridiculed by the Roman poet Juvenal, but later times seriously censured by church councils.

Fourth, we must remember that Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchisedech (Heb. 7:11) and Jewish priests wore their hair short

(Ezek. 44:20). Following this command for priests the Jewish Talmud states that all priests were to have their hair cut once every thirty days. It is likely that Jesus would seek to follow this example to illustrate His typical fulfillment of the priesthood position (Heb. 7:25). Fifth, another reason why Jesus could not have long hair is because it is unthinkable that the Lord would have contradicted the clear teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 by wearing long hair. This would convey a sign of rebellion to God's intended order for the sexes (1 Cor. 11:3). Jesus would not want to portray such a message as this by walking around with long hair during His earthly ministry. Sixth, Jesus was not a Nazarite so He would not follow the Nazarite vow, which forbid the cutting of hair for a period of time. Jesus was actually a Nazarene who came from the city of Nazareth (Matt. 2:23; Mark 14:67; John 1:46; Acts 10:38) but this in no way means he followed the Nazarite vow. This is a false assumption given by many people.

It must be observed that the Nazarite grew his hair longer as a sign that his whole body and life were dedicated to God. His long hair became an emblem of his personal devotion to God (Numb. 6:1-5; Judges 13:5; 1 Sam. 1:11). *This is not the same attitude that men possess today when they decide to grow their hair long and feminine in appearance.* Long hair on men no longer has this meaning or significance attached to it. Today long hair on men sends the opposite message. Long hair on men is a sign that represents rebellion in our society and rebellion to God's established pattern of order among the sexes (1 Cor. 11:3). This alone should rule out long hair on men for today (1 Thess. 5:22). In addition, it must be observed that long hair on men was not the norm and this is why the Nazarite could stand out as being different than the average man. Furthermore, it must be recognized that the Nazarite did not keep his hair long. He shaved his hair off and dedicated it to God (Lev. 6:18). Most Nazarites took a vow for 100 days or less.

The Jewish Mishna states that a Nazirite vow could last as long as 100 days, but the usual length was thirty days. *We must remember that this was a vow - not a way of life.* In some rare cases, people were Nazirites for life such as Samuel, Samson, John the Baptist. In reply to these findings we can rightly conclude that the Nazarites were *singled out in their appearance to indicate God's special dealings and purposes with them.* There is something worth repeating

for emphasis. The fact that the Nazarite could be singled out, as being different, would lead us to believe that long hair on men was not a normal or accepted practice in society.

The long hair on Nazarites sent a message to the people that they were fully dedicated to God in a special way. However, the Nazarite vow and long hair on these Jewish men would never upset God's normal preference and desire for men to wear hair short, a hair length that is unlike a woman's hair length (1 Cor. 11:14). Lastly, if you want to be a Nazarite today like John the Baptist you might also consider reading how John the Baptizer walked through the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4)!

We must also remember that others who left their hair grow long throughout their lives were very questionable in character, such as Samson (Judges 16:17) and Absalom (2 Sam. 15:6). Their hair certainly was not a sign of their dedication to God as was evidenced by their lives. The most famous Nazarite was Samson. Although no razor had touched his head since birth, his hair was fastened with "7 locks" (Judges 16:13-15). There is something interesting to note. The word "locks" is never used in the Bible with regard to a woman's hair. Only the Nazarites kept their hair in locks (Numb. 6:5). Locks were plaited ("interwoven") strands or ringlets of hair that were designed to demonstrate some kind of difference among the men who wore their hair long during this vow.

Distinction between a man and woman's hair was still important to God even when the Nazarites hair was long during his time of vow. To have long hair, except for religious purposes was shameful and not ordinary for men. Nevertheless, those who promote long hair on men suggest that God would not encourage long hair one place in the Bible and then in another place condemn it. This is contradictory. The claim is made that since the Nazarites had long hair and were never condemned for having it, then men must have the right to have long hair even today.

There are several fatal flaws to this line of reasoning. First, you need to be a Jewish Nazarite to qualify for long hair. Second, you need to cut your hair after thirty or one hundred days. If you want to be a Nazarite, you must follow these laws. Third, if you want to follow the

example of the men who were Nazarites for life then you can never cut your hair again! You must also wear it in locks. Fourth, if you want to keep your hair long you will have to override the natural instinct that God has placed within you about long hair (1 Cor. 11:14) and reflect rebellion against God's order for men who are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and representing headship or leadership in marriage (1 Cor. 11:3). Fifth, in keeping your hair long you would have to rebel against the New Testament command that revoked the Old Testament procedure of Nazarite vows. You would have to place yourself under all of the Mosaic Law, which involves sacrificing animals and following the sabbatical laws and intricate procedures of Old Testament Judaism. However, the Bible says that we are no longer living under the Mosaic Law (Rom. 6:14).

Old or New Testament?

We must remember that the Nazarite vow under the Mosaic Law does not overrule the normal God-given pattern for the distinction among the sexes (1 Cor. 11:14) and how a man's hair was to be distinct from a woman's hair length (1 Cor. 11:15). The Bible sets limits on that which is under the law and is culturally bound. The command of New Testament (1 Cor. 11:14) has revoked the Nazarite practice, which was part of the Old Testament Mosaic Law. *This is an important hermeneutical point of Biblical interpretation.* McQuilkin has observed: "All Scripture should be received as normative for every person in all societies of all time unless the Bible itself limits the audience." In other words, when the Bible limits the audience to Jews living under the law (Nazarites), who were practicing Jewish vows, we cannot assume that this is an accepted practice for us today. If this were the case we should assume that stoning (Lev. 20:11), bringing animal sacrifices (Lev. 1) and the observance of all the dietary and Sabbath laws should still be practiced for today (Lev. 11). But this is a false assumption (Col. 2:16).

The obvious dispensational point is this. The clear instruction in the New Testament revokes the Old Testament practice and in this case clarifies God's clear mind on the matter of sexual distinction (1 Cor. 11:14-15). When the Bible gives a clear command and nowhere else nullifies this command, it must then be accepted as the revealed will

of God and a mandate to mold our personal and group behavior. The Bible is its own authority and can set limits on which practices are culture-bound, law-bound, New Testament-bound, and which ones are not. One way we can determine which commands are to be repeated or observed for today is by examining where the command or situation is given and if it is repeated elsewhere in Scripture in a similar way. If it is given under the Mosaic Law, and not repeated in any fashion for New Testament living, then we can be sure that it is no longer to be observed. Likewise, if it's mentioned in the New Testament epistles we can be sure that it is for New Testament Christianity. Since in the New Testament God commands a distinction among the sexes with regard to hair lengths it must be observed. *Nothing written in the Old Testament about Nazarite vows or Samson's hair would overturn God's clear revelation of the New Testament Scriptures.*

What About Absalom and Elijah?

It's also claimed by those who promote long hair on men, that long hair on men is actually praised. For instance, in 2 Samuel 14:25-26 Absalom's long hair was said to be praised for its handsome appearance and nowhere is it ever referred to as shameful. However, one must understand that this is simply *the historian's recognition of Absalom's beauty before the people and not an endorsement for the length of his hair*. Men, if you want to have hair like Absalom you will have to let your hair grow to the weight of about five pounds!

Others also suggest that in 2 Kings 1:8 the messenger's description of a man with long hair and a leather girdle caused the king to instantly realize it was the prophet Elijah. It's reasoned that Elijah must have had long hair and this would also indicate God's endorsement of long hair on men. However, Elijah was a "hairy man" not because he had long hair but because he wore the traditional hairy garment (probably made from goats' dark hair) that was part of the dress of prophets at this time.

The expression "hairy man" connotes the wearing of his hairy garment that was held together with a belt ("girt with a girdle of leather"). The prophet cloth was woven from hair. It was as rough as burlap and sometimes called sackcloth. Since sackcloth symbolized

distress or self-affliction (6:30; Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31), Elijah's garb visualized the repentance to which the prophets called the people (Neh. 9:1; Jer. 6:26). Ahaziah recognized his messengers' description of Elijah immediately. It was not long hair that he noticed but his hairy garb which he wore as a prophet. There is no evidence that Elijah had long hair.

So does God contradict Himself concerning the message of long hair on men? No. According to God's revelation in the Old Testament, long hair on men, except for religious purposes, was shameful to men. God simply has allowed some variation in His plan and purpose for men within the Nazarite vow under the Mosaic Law. God allowed the hair on men to have a typical lesson for a specific time under Jewish Law. It was a sign of dedication and absolute surrender to God. However, the typical teaching is no longer valid since we are not under Law (Rom. 6:14) and since we are told to dedicate ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1-2) without rituals and typical lessons. *We no longer live in the day of rituals and symbols.* In short, the true and lasting outward expression for Biblical manhood will never change. A man is to have short hair (1 Cor. 11:14). This is God's clear and unmistakable truth that He presents to the churches for today. There can be no misunderstanding about what God is saying unless a person wants to try and find loopholes in God's plan for men in order to promote his rebellious ways. The man's hair is to be short to signify his headship under Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). The distinction among the sexes reflects the spiritual order.

b. A woman's hair should be long (vs. 15).

Paul is saying that a woman should not abandon the characteristic of natural physiology that marks femininity. To a woman in all ages and countries long hair has been considered a womanly trait. When she cuts her hair and appears as a man is strips her of her feminine appearance and beauty.

There are two reasons why women should have long hair:

1. Because it is a mark of femininity.

The word “glory” in this passage and context is conveying a sense of honor and delight (vv. 4-7). A woman’s long hair becomes her mark of feminine beauty and therefore brings her honor, respect, and dignity as a woman, and a sense of delight in being a woman (“it is a glory to her”). The unique beauty of a woman is gloriously manifest in the distinctive femininity portrayed by her long hair. Long hair is also a woman’s glory in the sense that it gives a visible expression to the differentiation of the sexes and a woman’s willingness to submit to male authority. This has always been true. Long hair on a woman brings her “glory” (honor, dignity, respect) since it sets her off as feminine in appearance, the way God created her to be, and since it becomes the token of her submission to her husband. A woman with short hair appears the same as her husband and throws off the token of her subjection. So long hair on a woman is a demonstration of femininity, beauty, and female subordination to male authority. It becomes a mark of glory to every woman and womanhood in general. Female long hair presents a woman with honor and dignity, since it upholds the distinction among the sexes, portrays the beauty of a woman, and becomes a token of female subjection to God’s will concerning headship.

Long hair on a woman gives her a sense of honor, excellence, beauty, and praise, as a woman, whereas short hair would bring her shame, even as long hair on a man brings him shame (vs. 14). This is the clear understanding of this text. Long hair marks femininity. There can be no getting around this. This is why Christian women today need to evaluate what kind of cultural hairstyles they adopt for their own lifestyle. *They need to make sure that they are representing femininity in the best possible light.*

When a woman cuts and shaves her hair like a man she begins to blur the distinctions among the sexes and loses the sense of feminine glory (honor and dignity) that God intended her to express as a woman. She loses her feminine trait of beauty and excellence as a woman. Every woman knows by God-given natural instinct (“nature” – vs. 14) that a woman is shamed by wearing short hair. *This is true cross-culturally and racially.* A woman from any background or Caucasian that wears short hair like a man’s is simply rebellious to God’s purpose for womanhood and feminine distinctiveness. Short

hair on women shames every woman of every race in every land on every continent.

1 Corinthians 11:14

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

The Seattle Mariners baseball team at one time would host an annual Buhner Buzz Cut Night, and anyone who has his or her head shaved can get into the game for free. This is in honor of the Mariners' star outfielder, Jay Buhner, whose trademark is a shaved head. Each year there are a few women who participate in this. In 1997, for example, less than 30 of the 5,000 who participated in this promotion were female. For a woman to have her head shaved is extremely rare and is contrary to the woman's natural desire. She does not want to be bald. She knows that it does shame her femininity and she loses her glory and dignity as being feminine. It's interesting that when the Germans were defeated at the end of World War II, some of the women in France who had cohorted with and helped the German soldiers were shaved as a sign of disgrace. Women with short hair and no hair has always been a sign of disgrace (1 Cor. 11:6).

Once again many women will ask, "How long is long?" This is similar to the question which long-haired men might ask, "How long is long for a man or how short is short?" The answer is not difficult. Long hair on a woman, defined by this passage, is hair that is long enough to cover her head (11:6,15), in a similar way like the customary veil did, and this would mark her as distinctively female (11:14-15). The Bible does not say that she can never cut her hair. It does not say that her hair must be to her waist. It simply says it is to be long enough to be a covering of her head and to mark her as distinctively female in contrast to the man's short hair.

If a woman's hair is short like a man's, she is dishonoring her head and is sowing confusion regarding God's spiritual order (1 Cor. 11:3). If there is any question as to whether or not her hair is too short, it is too short. Someone said: "God's people should not try to dance on the very edge of that which is proper." There should be no question in the minds of those who observe us that we are obeying God's Word.

The Lord exhorts us to “approve things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10) - not things which are mediocre and borderline.

One of the most touching stories in the Bible is that given in Luke 7:37-38. Here is the record. "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

This woman was expressing her repentance and submission to Jesus Christ by washing his feet with her tears and hair. Jesus seemed to be touched and delighted to have His feet wiped with the long hair of this woman's head. The Lord Jesus forgave and saved this woman, but she could have never given this beautiful mark of her repentance and faith if she had been a modern woman with short hair that looks like a man's hair length.

I think this story shows that our Lord is pleased with longer hair on women – hair that at least makes a distinguishing feminine appearance on women and gives them the glory (honor and dignity) that a woman is to have as a woman. I can't but help to imagine that even after the Saviour was crucified, this woman, saved from a life of sin, would brush her long flowing hair happily, and remember the day when she had the joy of wiping the feet of the Saviour who had forgiven her sins.

The Scriptures stress that women have always been known for longer hair. Even the apocalyptic literature brings this truth out (“And they had hair as the hair of women” – Rev. 9:8). In the Song of Solomon, the man looked upon his bride with love and desire while glancing at hair (Song 4:1). Long hair on women is the outward demonstration of the beauty and charm or femininity. It's what gives a woman her overall feminine appearance. One writer said: “The unique beauty of a woman is gloriously manifest in the distinctive femininity portrayed by her hair and her attendance to feminine customs.” This is really what Paul is saying in this entire passage. The veil is only necessary if it is a feminine custom so that femininity can be portrayed according to local custom (vs. 13). Likewise, women must always remember to

keep their hair longer to maintain the feminine appearance and not blur the distinction among the sexes (vs. 14). A woman must appear as a woman with her natural veil that God has given to her.

Even the old T.V. shows knew more about the Bible than some preachers of today. They actually believed the Bible more than some Christians of today. On the old "I Love Lucy" show Lucy wanted to get a short hair cut. These were the words of Lucy's husband (Ricky) to her concerning her short haircut. Ricky's (Desi Arnaz) reply was: "Lucy, there is a difference between men and women. Men have short hair and women have long hair. I am not going to have my wife getting her hair cut off and looking like a man. It will confuse Little Ricky and I do not want my son to grow up with a mother that looks like his father." Now listen. If Ricky Ricardo could preach 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 on his TV show, I should hope to think that I can, as a preacher, speak forth with authority what God expects of men and women. It's gotten pretty bad when television actors preach and know more of the Word of God than most Christians and preachers! By the way, 1 Corinthians 11 is just as much the Word of God as John 3:16.

I am convinced the average preacher is cowardly in regard to speaking to the women of his congregation. But he must do so with grace and kindness (Col. 4:6) so that women will portray femininity and female submission to authority in the best possible light. Women must understand about the charm and beauty (feminine appearance) that long hair brings to her and the honor ("glory") it brings to a godly woman (a sense of dignity and respect) for presenting herself as feminine in appearance and submissive to male headship.

The symbol of true femininity is on a woman's head. It is her long hair, which pictures her submission to the will of God. I'm convinced that if women truly understand what God says about Biblical womanhood and Biblical femininity they would never cut their hair like a man. Ladies the Bible does tell you how to keep your hair. Keep it long and keep it from looking like a man's hair. This is not your decision but God's decision. When you know exactly what the Bible says you ought to practice what you know is right and proper (John 13:17; James 1:22).

2. Because it is the symbol of submission.

When Paul says that a woman's hair is "given to her for a covering" (1 Cor. 11:15) he was emphasizing that a woman's hair is a natural covering or veil that every woman has which pictures female submission to male headship. A woman's long hair is a token of her submission to her husband and male authority in general. God gave woman a natural covering of glory. The normal sense of the Greek preposition "for" (anti) means literally "instead of." So the literal rendering of this should be translated "instead of a covering" which makes sense in the context of veiling. The woman's natural veil is her hair and long hair becomes her covering to express submission to male headship. Paul is simply saying that a woman's hair was given to her instead of a physical covering or artificial veil, for the woman's hair in itself *is* a natural covering. The artificial veil is not what Paul is pressing upon all churches for all time. It is the natural God-given veil that all women possess (her long hair) that is given to a woman, as a veil, to demonstrate the distinction among the sexes, female beauty, and submission to male headship.

When a woman cuts her hair like a man she is sending the message that she does not want to support God's order for the home and church. Her hair does send a significant message of her attitude toward female submission to headship. Of course, the Scripture does not dictate overall "spirituality" by the length of one's hair. The real issue here is submission to divine authority and a heart's desire to practice the distinction among the sexes. We realize that a woman's hair length is not necessarily an evidence of her heart's condition. There are women who have long hair and have wicked hearts, and there are women who have short hair who have a right heart toward God.

There are godly Christian women who have not been taught about these matters and have cut their hair short, as a matter of convenience or fashion, without understanding the significance of their hairstyle. There are women who are new converts who have short hair and have not had opportunity to learn these things. However, every woman must sooner or later face this Biblical issue and not neglect representing femininity and submission in the best possible light. It's important for pastors and women teachers in the

church (Titus 2:3-4) to stress the distinction among the sexes as God's blueprint for marriage, church, and even society. Mothers and fathers should teach their children (Eph. 6:4) the distinction among the sexes so that they might grow up without being adversely influenced by the culture. The lines are being blurred today and only if we stay in tune with what the Scriptures teach can we live out masculinity and femininity according to God's creative order and natural law.

Even the pagan philosopher Epictetus, a Stoic who taught in the second half of the first century, speaks of the difference in hair of men and women respectively. He concludes, "Wherefore, we ought to preserve the signs which God has given; we ought not to throw them away; we ought not, so far as in us lies, to confuse the sexes which have been distinguished in this fashion." Even a pagan writer acknowledges the difference God has created and made part of a creation order. If this is true surely faithful pastors to God's Word should do the same.

6. The Concluding Remark - 16

1 Corinthians 11:16 says:

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

To be "contentious" is to be disposed to argue for argument's sake. With such people all argument is useless. Someone said: "Authority is the only end of controversy with such disturbers of the peace!" The authority here is that of the apostles ("we"). The apostles were invested with authority not only to teach the Gospel, but also to organize the church and to decide everything relating to Christian ordinances and worship.

It seems that some of the Corinthian believers, men as well as women, were being contentious or arguing with Paul over this matter of headship and submission and the need to wear the symbol of subordination in Corinth. They were determined to follow their own principles and standards regardless of what the apostle said. In pride and arrogance some in the Corinthian church wanted to be a law unto themselves and decide what was right and proper. They acted like

they had a corner on truth and dared others to question them. But Paul debunks this way of thinking. When Paul says “we” he could have been referring to all the apostles who founded the initial churches. It’s also probable that Paul was referring to himself and the church of Ephesus, from where he was writing, and that Paul and the church of Ephesus, among all the other churches, manifested no such custom.

Whatever the case might be Paul was putting apostolic authority in the forefront. This is what really counts. When Paul mentions the other churches (“neither the churches of God”) he embraces all the local churches that were established by the apostles in that day and time. Furthermore, he sets a standard and precedence for all the churches to follow in the succeeding generations. The epistles were written for the church age and addressed to the local congregations for today. Paul then sets these self-made and would-be apostles in their place by standing firm on what he has just stated by saying “we have no such custom” or any other practice. This is it. What I say stands! It’s my way or the highway! You can’t get any clearer than this. But what was the custom or practice the apostles had and all of the other churches in that day and time? What did they practice? What was their custom?

I have found many varied answers to this question. First, some have said Paul was referring to the custom or practice of the veiling and there was no other custom other than the veiling procedure that he was instituting for the churches of all time. Paul was saying that the churches of God did not have any such custom as that of women praying or prophesying without being covered. But this is highly unlikely since the backdrop to the entire section is God’s creative order of headship and submission (vs. 3) – not the practice of veiling.

It is actually the principle of women’s subordination to men that Paul is enforcing for all churches for all times, *not the particular mark or symbol* of that subordination. The apostle is not laying down a universal principle that Christian women should always worship with their heads covered. Rather, in going back to the beginning of Genesis order (vss. 6-9) he was suggesting that women follow their local customs that symbolize subordination and distinguish between the sexes. The whole tenor of grace and the later epistles never

enforce a particular headdress for women. Furthermore, Paul would not say that a woman's hair is given to her instead of a covering in verse 14 and then turn around and say she needs another covering in verse 16. She does not need two coverings. Lastly, the fact that Paul says "we have no such custom" or practice could naturally speak against the veiling procedure.

Second, although some conclude that Paul was enforcing veiling on women others have concluded just the opposite. They say that Paul was conveying that veiling is not a custom to practice. In other words, we don't have any custom of veiling (vs. 16) or no such procedure and this becomes an easy escape route for all future church generations from following the veiling procedure. However, this interpretation goes against Paul's reasoning in verse four for he clearly wants the women of Corinth to veil. To say he does in verse four and then say he does not in verse sixteen also seems contradictory. This interpretation of verse 16 would mean that Paul considered these instructions as of no real consequence, and he had just been wasting over half a chapter of Holy Scripture in setting them forth!

Third, some have even suggested that Paul was teaching that veiling is not a custom to be followed since the early gift of prophesying would eventually become irrelevant in the church (1 Cor. 13:8-10). This seems highly unlikely since the matter of praying is also introduced as a reason for Christian women to veil. Did prayer go out of the church with the early sign gifts? I think not!

Fourth, others suggest that Paul was referring to the practice of a woman having long hair in public since he had just alluded to her long hair in verse 15. Although a woman's hair is her glory she needs to cover it and only reveal it to her life partner. She needs to cover up her glory when she is in church or in public. This cannot be the proper interpretation since the woman's hair was actually given to her for a covering (instead of the artificial covering). This would seem to dismiss the idea that she needed another covering. Paul was actually saying that her natural veil would replace the artificial veil. There is no mention of covering her natural covering with an artificial covering.

Fifth, others have concluded that no custom of bobbed hair was allowed for women in New Testament churches. This conclusion is

falsely derived from a misunderstanding of verse six which takes the uncovered women to mean possessing bobbed hair (the cutting of her hair). Paul did not say in verse six that an uncovered woman was a woman who had her hair cut but one who failed to wear a veil.

Sixth, some suggest that the distinction between the man and the woman in position and authority and the significance of one's hair length is not very important. Therefore, if someone does not agree with these things, the churches should not make an issue of it. However, if this were the meaning of verse 16 it would be a very strange. Why would God inspire this passage about authority, headship, submission (1 Cor. 11:3) and the intuitive nature of hair lengths if it can be disregarded by all the churches? If this is the meaning of verse 16, Paul would be saying, in essence, "I have spent fifteen verses teaching you the significance of the Genesis order, following local customs in light of this order, and maintaining hair length on a man and a woman that reflects this spiritual order. However, it is not very important and if you don't agree with it, we will not make an issue of it. This certainly cannot be the meaning of verse sixteen.

Seventh, some conclude that both long hair on women and short hair on men (vv. 14-15) are cultural and no practice of such needs to be followed in succeeding church generations (vs. 16). But this misses the point that Paul argued for long hair on women and shorter hair on men from nature or the natural instincts that God has built into the human race. It was not culture or custom that made this distinction but the natural sense of right and wrong that God has intuitively placed within mankind regarding sexual distinction in hair length.

So what is Paul saying? It seems that Paul was conveying the thought that no one has the particular custom or practice of arguing against the apostles (vs. 16). What they say must be followed without argument. Paul was saying that the churches of God did not have any such practice of arguing against apostolic command. I think this is a probable interpretation that seems to fit the many different things Paul was instructing throughout the passage. Whatever I say as an apostle is to be followed without argument, since no churches have any such practice of arguing with the apostles.

The actual custom or practice that the churches were not to override was disputing and arguing with the apostle. Paul is not singling out one of the specific teachings that he presented in verses 1-15 but all of them. It's best not to view the custom as one of the specific commands mentioned in the previous verses. Rather, verse sixteen is a concluding statement of all that Paul had said in verses 1-15. It is not just a concluding statement regarding veiling or some other specific issue. In essence, whatever Paul has shared in verses 1-15 is what the churches need to practice. No questions asked! No arguments! There is no such practice to argue with what an apostle says. None of the things he shared could be undone. They are all set in stone. It's the custom or practice of the churches to simply follow what I've said and never argue over anything that I share. So when Paul says we "have no such custom" he was referring to the practice of arguing with the established truth of the apostles.

The churches were to follow everything that Paul commands. There is no other truth to follow but the apostolic commands (Acts 2:42). *Paul was saying that the churches of God did not have any such custom or practice of arguing against what He teaches and refusing to follow His direct commands (1 Cor. 11:16).* This statement in 1 Corinthians 11:16 is one of four similar statements in this epistle that has served to inform the Corinthians that they were out of step with the other churches in their conduct (3:18; 8:2; 14:37). So Paul once again reinforces that the people were out of order thinking they knew more than the apostles and could argue with Paul.

Generally speaking, the apostolic commands that the people were not to argue about but follow, included everything that Paul had just discussed concerning in verses 1-15. Such things as creation's order, veiling, the angels, local customs, and natural instinct in the sexes must be followed. None of these things were open for discussion. There was not established practice or custom of arguing against the apostles. There was no open forum and discussion about any of these matters. They were all the apostolic commands and part of the "ordinances" handed down to the people by the apostle (vs. 2). They were closed matters as far as the apostles and the churches were concerned.

What Paul said about God's creative order of headship and submission could never be undone (vs. 3, 6-9). What Paul said about veiling in relationship to the *cultural* practice of men and women in Corinth could not be changed (vss. 4-6). What Paul said about mutual interdependence in the marriage relationship cannot be discarded (vss. 11-12). What he said about churches judging or determining for themselves whether or not it's appropriate to veil in their community could not be changed (vs. 13). What he said about the natural instincts within the consciousness of the human race concerning sexual differences (masculinity and femininity) cannot be undone (vss. 14-15).

In essence, if any person wants to argue about these matters we have no other custom or practice than what was just revealed concerning all of these matters. *We have no custom or practice to argue against apostolic commands and traditions handed down to the church (2 Thess. 2:15; 3: 6)*. So Paul finishes the way he starts. Keep the ordinances (vs. 2). Don't argue with what I've said or refuse what the apostles have taught you for there is no other truth except apostolic truth (Acts 2:42).

The apostles and the other churches were firmly committed to creation's order concerning male headship and female submission. They held to the practice that women should wear longer hair than men and men should have shorter hair than women based upon the natural instincts of right and wrong that God has placed within mankind. They were not to abandon the characteristics of natural physiology that marked masculinity and femininity. They held to the truth that a woman's natural hair is given to her for a covering. And where custom dictated it, they were committed to wearing proper head coverings to distinguish themselves as submissive.

Generally speaking, the churches were not to violate the sexual distinctions and patterns that culture and society have established as legitimate marks of sexual distinction. They should adhere to culture in this way so as to maintain the necessary distinctions between male and female roles and gender. The churches were committed to the apostolic tradition that was handed down to them. These things were part of the apostolic practice and no arguments or compromise could be made concerning these issues. There is no other truth to follow

but the teaching of the apostles. Period. Paul was then saying that the churches have “no such custom” or practice to argue against apostolic teaching. They are expected to follow the apostolic commands and traditions set forth.

A recently licensed pilot was flying his private plane on a cloudy day. He was not very experienced in instrument landing. When the control tower was to bring him in for a landing, he started thinking of the hills and the towers and buildings in that area and began to get panicky. In a calm but stern voice the command came, "You just obey instructions; we'll take care of the obstructions." In a similar way, Paul was telling the Corinthians and every Christian today to just obey the instructions that he gave to the churches. When we do we will find great joy and lasting fulfillment in life.

The Veiling Question Revisited

In recapping this section, Paul brings something to the table that will help all churches to decide whether or not veiling is proper for their assemblies. Since the woman's hair is an outward visible expression of her feminine beauty and submissiveness, and a natural replacement for a veil (vs. 14), cultural conditions will dictate whether or not a veil is appropriate (vs. 13 – “Judge for yourselves”). If the custom of a veil is not practiced in a country or community then there is no reason for Christian women to veil since the natural instinct, which is already placed within man, would dictate or teach that a woman's hair length is already a sign of her femininity and subordination to male authority.

So in the final analysis Paul does not overturn his cultural consideration about the veil but reconfirms it. At the same time, he confirms to all the churches of future centuries throughout different lands, and who have different customs, the necessary mark of male and female difference, which reflects God's creative order and the distinction among the sexes. It is the distinguishing physiology of their hair lengths. Paul reminds us that it is a woman's longer hair length (vs. 14) that marks her out as distinctly feminine and submissive to God's created order of headship (1 Cor. 11:3).

It is the principle of women's subordination to men that Paul is enforcing for all churches for all times, *not the cultural mark or symbol* of that subordination. The apostle is not laying down a universal principle that Christian women should always worship with their heads covered with artificial veils. Rather, in going back to the beginning (Genesis) he was suggesting that women follow their local customs that distinguish between the sexes (1 Cor. 11:6) and follow the God-given instincts of keeping their hair longer to represent the feminine gender, distinction among the sexes, and spiritual order. They are to keep the distinction clear enough that there can be no question about a person's desire or intent to confuse the sexes and the divine order given in Genesis.

The whole New Testament Scriptures should be the test for whether or not a woman is obligated to wear a headdress and not some isolated passage taken by itself. The interpretive principle is this. If any portion or passage of Scripture seems unclear it should be interpreted by that which is clear and definite. Since the rest of the New Testament is silent on Christian women veiling, and since Paul clearly says a woman's hair is an ample sign for her covering (1 Cor. 11:15), the conclusion must be drawn that women in all churches and succeeding church generations must *not* wear veils or head coverings when worshiping or in society. Rather, they must maintain a feminine hair length that brings honor and dignity to both the beauty and submissive character of womanhood.