

## *I Corinthians*

### *Chapter 11:1-16*

<sup>1</sup> Be ***imitators*** of me, just as I also am of Christ.

**Imitators** > (HELPS Word-studies) mimétés: (the root of the English term, *mimic*, "one who imitates, emulates")

**Barnes** > (The first verse in this chapter properly belongs to the preceding, and is the conclusion of the discussion which the apostle had been carrying on in that and the previous chapters. It has been improperly separated from that chapter, and in reading should be read in connection with it.)

**Utley** > Chapters 11 through 14 deal with matters of gathered worship. They form a unified literary unit.

1. Men's and women's attire and actions (1 Cor. 11:2-16)
2. Observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)
3. The exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14)

**Utley** > (after discussing the multiple interpretations of I Corinthians 11:2-16) > It seems that this ambiguous context is open to multiple interpretations. These interpretations say more about the interpreter's biases than Paul's intent. A text which has been and can be understood in so many ways by sincere believers must surely not be used in a definitive, dogmatic way to restrict or advocate the place and function of women in the church or the relationship between men and women in all ages and cultures.

<sup>2</sup> Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the ***traditions***, just as I ***handed them down*** to you.

**Utley** > In light of the previous chapters, one wonders if this verse is irony or sarcasm. This church was not remembering Paul's words and was not following his teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17,22).

**Traditions ... handed them down** > (Utley) There is a Greek wordplay between "traditions" (*paradoseis*) and "delivered" (*paredōka*), which are both forms of *paradidōmi*. Paul was not the originator, but simply a link in the chain of revelation.

<sup>3</sup> ***But*** I want you to ***understand*** that Christ is the ***head*** of every man, and the man is the ***head*** of a woman, and God is the ***head*** of Christ.

**But** > (Constable) "But" indicates that things were not quite as Paul thought they should be.

**Understand** > (Strong's) *oida*

**Head** > (Strong's) head

**Utley** > Jesus was the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Humans, male and female, were created by Him, in His image. However, the Son is submissive to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:2; 15:28). This appropriate submission extends to men and women. They are both created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but there is an order, man first, then woman (cf. Gen. 2:18) related to function (at least in a patriarchal system), but not inequality!

**Swindoll** > Paul did not say, or even hint, that difference meant inequality or inferiority. If there is to be peace in the church (1 Cor. 15:33), then there must be some kind of order; and order of necessity involves rank. However, rank and quality are two different things. The captain has a higher rank than the private, but the private may be a better man.

<sup>4</sup>*Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.*

**Has something on his head** > (Vincent) Lit., having something hanging down from his head

**Prophesying** > (Strong's) to foretell, tell forth, prophesy

**Disgraces** > (Strong's) to put to shame, to disgrace

**Head** > (Constable) (In referencing another author says) he probably meant his spiritual head: Jesus Christ.

**Constable** > In Roman and Greek cultures, both men and women covered their heads as signs of shame and mourning. It was later, in the Middle Ages, that Jewish men began to cover their heads when praying, and in fact, most of the time. In Christian worship, the men did not wear head-coverings in Paul's day, but the women normally did. Paul's reference to praying and prophesying seems to set his instructions in the context of the church at public worship.

<sup>5</sup>*But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for it is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.*

**Disgraces her head** > (Utley) Corinth was a Roman colony and reflected Roman culture. Roman women were marriageable in their early teens. The veil was a cultural aspect of the marriage service. It was expected to be worn outside the home by Roman women. Its absence would be seen as

1. a shamed woman
2. a prostitute
3. a dominant lesbian partner

4. a "new" woman (i.e., a social movement of equality and freedom active among Roman society in the first century)

A woman flaunting herself in this manner would have publicly shamed her husband and given the wrong impression about the church to visitors and the community. Christ makes males and females free, but each has an obligation to limit freedom for the cause of Christ. Women and men, wives and husbands who are believers are called on to live for the health and growth of the Kingdom!

**Constable** > Today it is not shameful for a woman to have short hair, but it was in Paul's day. There are many short hairstyles that no one regards as "disgraceful." However in Paul's culture, short hair for a woman represented rebellion, and people considered it shameful.

<sup>6</sup>For *if* a woman does not cover her head, have her also cut her hair off; however, *if* it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, have her cover her head.

<sup>7</sup>For a man should not have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup>For man does not ~~originate~~ originate from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup>for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

**Originate** > (Utlley) The term "originate" is not in the Greek text. It is only the preposition *ek* (i.e., out of), as is 1 Cor. 11:12.

**Sake** > (Strong's) A primary preposition denoting the channel of an act

**Robertson** > (I've removed the extensive Greek words used to explain his conclusion) > The record in Genesis gives the man as the origin of the woman and the reason for the creation of the woman.

**Genesis 2:10** > <sup>20</sup>*The man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.*

**Constable** > Furthermore woman is the glory of man because God created Eve to complete Adam. God did not create the man as a companion for the woman, but the woman "for (the) man's sake" (Gen. 2:18, 20) ... When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he "gloried" in her (Gen. 2:23)

<sup>10</sup> Therefore the woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

**The woman should have a symbol of authority on her head** (Constable) The Greek text simply says "the woman ought to have authority on her head." ... I think probably Paul meant that the women were to cover their heads because the head-covering was a visible sign that they were submitting to God's authority over them. Specifically, they were not rebelling against their position as women.

<sup>11</sup> However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as the woman originated from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

**Independent** > (Strong's) Separately or apart from ... beside, by itself, without

**Robertson** > Each sex is incomplete without the other

<sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does even nature itself not teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, <sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her as a covering.

**Nature** > (Strong's) growth (by germination or expansion) (from a word meaning to bring forth, produce)

**ZME Science** > In most cultures, women keep their hair longer than men. Cultural rules aside, hair length is actually sexual dimorphic\*. Generally, women are able to grow their hair longer than males. European males can reach a maximum length of wavy hair to about shoulder length, while the maximum for straight hair is about mid-back length. For European females, wavy hair can usually reach the waist, and straight hair can reach the buttocks or longer. (\* The existence of two different forms (as of color or size) of a species especially in the same population)

**Covering** > What a neat word! (Strong's) that which is thrown around, a covering

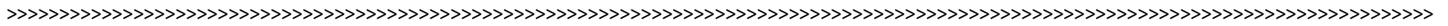
**Wuest Translation** > Come to a decision among yourselves. Is it seemly or fitting for a woman to be engaged in prayer to God not wearing the shawl hanging down over her head? Does not the innate sense of propriety itself based upon the objective difference in the constitution of things teach you that if indeed a man allows his hair to grow long, it is a disgrace to him, but if a woman allows her hair to grow long, it is her glory? because her head of hair has been given to her for a permanent covering

<sup>16</sup> But **if** anyone is **inclined** to be **contentious**, we have no such practice, nor have the churches of God.

**If** > (Strong's) ei

**Inclined** > (Utlley) The (Greek grammar) implies continual action. This contentiousness is a continuing attitude for them. They love strife and contention!

**Contentious** > (Strong's) *philoneikos* > fond of strife



**Swindoll > Application > 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16**

*The Orthodoxy of Hair-esy*

To many of us reading Paul's arguments and instructions on whether a woman should wear head coverings, the issue sounds strange. I have tried to emphasize that in Paul's day, the head covering communicated a woman's propriety, modesty, and respect for order and headship. In many Western cultures, head coverings no longer carry this meaning. If a woman wears a hat in today's church, some might even come to an opposite conclusion: She's showing off, trying to stand out, or imposing her worldly fashions onto the church!

As you can probably tell, I am not in favor of applying Paul's specific instructions concerning head coverings in his unique cultural context to our own culture today. I am, however, convinced that we need to apply the principles underlying Paul's instructions. We should ask ourselves, "If Paul were to step into our churches today, what visible signs of order and submission would he see?" As we seek to apply Paul's underlying doctrines to our own context, we should keep three principles in mind.

**First**, we need to remember that matters of fashion and style are culturally conditioned and personally applied. I have seen fashion trends come and go, and then come back again. Bell bottoms, straight jeans, rolled jeans, torn jeans, long dresses, short skirts, hats, toupees, long hair, short hair, wide ties, short ties, thin ties, bow ties—the list goes on and on. There is such a thing as "indecent," but the standards of "modesty" and "propriety" vary from culture to culture. Search the whole Bible and you won't find a scissor length for haircuts, a "knee rule" for skirts, or a dress code for Sunday worship. Whatever decisions we make about how we dress in our own culture, we should strive to communicate to others on the outside what is true of us on the inside.

**Second**, we need to keep in mind that our style should reflect our Christian identity as well as our sexual identity. When it comes to our physical appearance—hairstyle, jewelry, clothing, cosmetics, or body art—do we make decisions based on the goal of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31)?

Do we seek to point people to Him or attract people to us? Are we trying to display our own individual independence and personality or reflect His character and values? At the same time, are we dressing in ways that highlight our distinct sexuality and gender role, as defined by Scripture? As a woman, have you embraced your femininity as a gift from God? As a man, have you accepted the roles and responsibilities that accompany your own masculinity as assigned by Him? Are these gender roles reflected in the ways you conduct yourself externally toward others? By your dress, your speech, and your conduct around members of the opposite sex? If you're married, do your actions in these areas shame or honor your spouse?

**Finally**, we should willingly adapt our styles to glorify God. This is where Paul's principles can get delicate. Be painfully honest as you answer the following questions:

- Have you made a conscious decision to let go of your own image for His image?
- Are there specific fashion trends you need to avoid because they may not be regarded as holy, clean, and modest?
- Are your decisions in clothing culturally appropriate for your gender role, or are you intentionally pushing the envelope?
- Have you checked your motives about your decisions? Why do you dress the way you do—from shoes to hairstyles to cosmetics and fancy watches?
- Is it ever an attempt to hide something lacking inside or to call attention to yourself?

Take this opportunity now to make an important decision about this delicate issue, since others are watching and forming opinions. Make certain you are adapting your style to reflect God's glory, not your own.