

Head Covering

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1 Corinthians 11:1-16, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you to 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. 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 a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image of the glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. 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. Judge in yourselves; is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 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. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such customs neither the churches of God."

The teaching on head covering, as viewed by many Christians, is sometimes seen as the apostle Paul's opinion rather than a scriptural teaching. Head covering is one of major importance in the perfection of the church.

One cannot pick and choose from the scripture, holding on to what agrees with our ideas and discarding the rest. The scriptural foundation of head covering rests on submission, another biblical truth often misunderstood. Our Christian walk, the order of the church, and the body of Christ is built on submission. First of all, we are to submit to God the father. James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God, Resist the devil and he will flee from you." We are to submit one to the other in the fear of God. Wives are to be in submission to husbands, children to parents, servants to masters (Eph. 5 & 6). Submission is also misunderstood, being interpreted as a master-slave relationship. True biblical submission is based on love rather than domination. Obedience is also misunderstood as one person lording it over another. True submission is a spiritual act and cannot be entered into except by the Spirit of God. Submission is in the spirit of unity as Ephesians the fourth chapter tells us. Eph. 4:3-7, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called to one hope of your calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. **But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**" As we yield ourselves to the Lord he endues us with grace to be in unity, which is the first step on the road to submission.

The whole economy of God is based on headship; Christ in submission to His Father, the church in submission to Christ, and each of us in submission to those in authority over us in the Lord. The submission of Christ to the Father is seen in John 15:10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Matt 26:39, "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." This attitude should not only be reproduced in our Christian walk with God but should also extend to those who God has set over us. I am sure there would not be any argument as to our submission to God but when it comes to another person, we might have some difficulty. I read a little poem that goes something like this:

*To live above with saints we love
O, that will be glory.
To live below with saints we know
Now that's a different story,*

It is not a **person** that we are submitting to, but the ministry that God has given them and the measure of Christ within them. Col 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" To those who bear the responsibility of the oversight of the church we can say as Paul said in Phil 3:12-14, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We may not see perfection in ministries, but Praise God, we are entering into perfection. 1 Cor. 13:12, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." God has placed authority in the church to bring the body of Christ to perfection even though the church is not perfect.

Eph 4:11-13, "And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

I am sure some may feel they would surrender their independence if they were to be in submission to another person; this however, is not the case, as we are not in submission to the carnal nature of a person but rather to the Spirit of God in that person. 1 Cor. 6:19, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" We are not in submission to the carnal; it should be easy to determine if we are in submission to a carnal man or to a spiritual ministry. Jesus said in Matt 7:18-20, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." The Spirit of God should witness with our spirit if a person is carnal or

spiritual. If we follow after that which is carnal we will be led away from the Lord, if we follow after the spiritual, we will be led closer to God.

Submission is the foundation that Paul uses to explain head covering. He starts out talking about headship. 1 Cor. 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." This should not be hard to understand as it has been, in the past, part of the wedding ceremony and is still valid as far as the scripture goes.

In creation, Adam, the man, was first formed, then the woman, Eve, say the Scriptures, that the woman might be for man, setting forth the humility, modesty, gentleness that should characterize her kind.

Yet man, in being made last of all God's creatures was set forth as the best and most excellent of all God's creative works.

So Eve's being made after Adam, and out of him set an honour upon the woman as being the glory of man.

If the man is the head, she is the crown - a crown to her husband. The man was dust refined, but the woman was doubly refined - one step further from the earth.

In being created from man, or out of man she was **not**: Out of his head to dominate, or to be over hit **nor** out of his feet to be under him, or be trampled upon by him, **but**: "Out of his side to be equal with him from under his arm to be protected by him, and near to his heart to be loved by him."

Paul teaches this equality in Gal. 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Eph. 5:22, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." He tells the husbands to love their wives, Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," - then explains that it represents the relationship of Christ and the church. Eph 5:24, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything." Though the part of submission is sometimes left out of the marriage ceremony does not negate that it is scriptural. What Paul is saying is very important even though it goes against many of the philosophies of this age. Paul is talking about the church service and for many years it was thought improper for a woman to be in church without a head covering, but it is not deemed necessary in many Christian circles today. It is considered too old fashioned for this enlightened age in which we live.

Paul now lays the groundwork for head coverings: to the man he says it is improper for him to wear a head covering because he is in the image and glory of God; to the woman he says, she should be covered because she is in the glory of the man. 1 Cor. 11:4-7, "Every man who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair out off, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved,

let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is in the image and glory of God; but the woman is in the glory of man.” (NAS) By not wearing a head covering the man displays **his** head is not man but God, while the woman displays she is in subjection to the man by wearing a covering.

1 Cor. 11:8-10, "For man does not exist because woman exists, but vice versa. Man was not created originally for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. For this reason a woman ought to bear on her head an **outward** sign of man's authority for all the angels to see." (Phillips) This does not imply that women are inferior or of less worth than men, only that they have been ordained of God to fulfill different roles in life. 1 Cor. 11:12-13, "Of course, in the sight of God neither 'man' nor 'woman' has any separate existence. For if woman was made originally for man, no man is now born except by a woman, and both man and woman, like everything else, owe their existence to God." (Phillips) It does not mean that a woman cannot minister; that is the reason that a woman should wear a covering in the church meeting so she can pray and prophesy. 1 Cor 11:13-16, "Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God (with head) uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.” (NAS) The way this scripture is worded may lead one to believe that a woman's hair is given to her for a covering in the church service and that the church has no other custom but that the woman's hair is her covering there. By the context of verse 6 in the previous passage it is plain that a woman should wear a covering in the service. 1 Cor. 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." All translations say it is this way; some are clearer using our modern form of speech.

What does it mean then that the woman's hair is given her for covering? I believe it is talking about a natural covering. A woman's hair is a glory to her; even young girls begin to fuss with their hair at an early age. From a man's perspective I think it is beautiful to see a woman with well-groomed hair. (Boys on the other hand do not care much about their hair and have to be constantly reminded to comb and get it cut, except when they are interested in a young lady, then they spend countless hours before the mirror making sure every hair is in place.) The same scripture in the Living Bible makes it very clear I believe. 1 Cor. 11:13-16, "What do you yourselves really think about this? Is it right for a woman to pray in public without covering her head? Doesn't even instinct itself teach us that women's heads should be covered? For women are proud of their long hair, while a man with long hair tends to be ashamed. But if anyone wants to argue about this, all I can say is that we never teach anything else than this - that a woman should wear a covering when prophesying or praying publicly in the church, and all churches feel the same about it." (TLB) We may feel, "I am not going to church to minister therefore I do not need to wear a head covering." This is not a valid excuse as we are all to go prepared to pray and prophecy. 1 Cor 14:3-4, "But everyone who prophecies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church." 1 Cor 14:31, "For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged." (NIV) I am sure we all agree that the church needs to be

strengthened, encouraged and comforted. If this is so then it is **our** responsibility to do it. Each one of us should then come prepared to take our responsibility as ministering in the church.

My prayer is that God would enlighten our hearts as to truth of head coverings and we would not be contentious about it, as this is the custom we have in the churches. I believe it is a tremendous blessing when we take the scripture at face value and lay aside our own ideas and accept what the scripture says.