



04

HOLINESS IN WORSHIP: HEAD COVERINGS

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1 Corinthians 11:2-16

WEEK 04

Holiness in Worship: Head Coverings

This passage begins an important section of 1 Corinthians that focuses on holiness in the gathered worship service. Paul addresses how believers should behave when coming together to grow in the Lord. This includes instruction on proper dress, the Lord's supper, and the exercise of spiritual gifts. This week's passage focuses on proper dress in worship.

Paul praises the Corinthians for holding on to the traditions that he passed on to them. For some, "tradition" can be a trigger, but in fact there are many good traditions. Any tradition passed down from the Lord is good. It is loyalty to manmade traditions over the word of God that Jesus reprimands (Mark 7:8).

Paul then challenges the Corinthians for their approach to head coverings in times of prayer. While there is much about the specific cultural implications of head coverings that is misunderstood, Paul's main point is rooted in sound theology. Paul describes a series of relationships between God, Christ, man, and woman, each of which

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
- 02 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
- 03 Colossians 1:15-20
- 04 2 Thessalonians 3:1-6
- 05 1 Timothy 2:9-13
- 06 Genesis 1:26-28
- 07 Ephesians 5:21-32

is described as the “head” of the other. The meaning of “head” as a metaphor has been subject to intense debates over issues of *authority, preeminence, and source*. Whatever the specific nuance, Paul theologically argues that there is a distinct relationship between men and women that corresponds with their relationships to Christ. This relationship should be reflected even in the ways we dress during worship.

There is both partnership and distinction noted here. Neither sex is more valuable than the other. Both are made in the image of God. Both depend on each other. And both serve alongside each other in the church, praying and prophesying. And yet, while there is partnership, there is also a distinction of male and female that should be reflected in the worshipping practice of the church. Great discernment is required in determining how this should be reflected in contemporary church cultures.





1 Corinthians 11:2-16

ON COVERING THE HEAD IN WORSHIP

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

⁷ A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹² For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵ but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

WARM UP

What was your favorite television show when you were growing up?

We all have people who have influenced the direction of our lives. Who influenced you in significant ways to become the person you are today?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

Paul addresses topics that deal with behavior in corporate worship. How do worship services today differ from those you may have experienced as a child? What are positive things you see today?

What are things we should be mindful of in corporate worship so we do not distract others?

After previously confronting believers in Corinth regarding how they abused their freedom in Christ, what does Paul praise them for in verse 2?

Aspects of verses 3-16 have been difficult for theologians to interpret. This is in part due to our lack of understanding of the cultural norms of the day and how head coverings (or hairstyles) communicated different messages. One thing is for sure, Paul has been informed some have taken their freedoms in worship too far. How do verses 11-12 clarify Paul's respect and understanding of the roles of men and women in the church?

Is it possible to be equal as people and yet have distinct roles? How does this manifest itself in the workplace, athletics, and other areas of life?

How might this ideal regarding male and female roles in the church be related to Ephesians 5:21-32?

APPLICATION

How can we best model God's heart for us in corporate worship? Here are a few words to set your mind in motion: consistency, participation, humility, deference, attitude, openness, respect, friendliness, generosity...

THINK

"Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full (or half-full) of artificial admirers (like people who write generic anniversary cards for a living). On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affections for God, rooted in truth, are the bone and marrow of biblical worship."

-John Piper

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group. Pray for the Elders and leaders of your church.