

Topic	The Gospel and the Partnership of Women
Reference	1-Cor 11:2-16
Date	23 June 2019
Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

Today we are going to be dealing with the first of probably three passages where we will deal with the contentious issue of man and woman in society.

So the issue is head veils today and the 116 congress of United States overturned 181-year rule recently and allowed women for the first time to have a headdress in Congress.

Head coverings are controversial in their time and also now in certain societies. In fact, there are about some churches wanting to bring them back.

- A veil accentuates the natural beauty of a woman
- Some women pray better that way
- It feels right
- Veils things are sacred like tabernacle

In certain other societies it is a symbol of male domination and extremism. So it is controversial and if you look into the Corinthian society, here you have a society where woman are seen and not heard. They hide in the back rooms of the house, when they get out into the public, they are always accompanied by a male chaperone. They do not drive their cars alone. If you go to Saudi Arabia, they don't drive even. So it is a very patriarchal society where women, some commentators say the women's rank is slightly above the pig. So they are actually suppressed.

Now when they become Christians there is a new found freedom, when they throw off the shackles of male domination and patriarchy and suddenly they can come to church and they are like praying in public, sharing or prophesying in public or letting their hair down. In that context, we have to understand that we take this today. Now today, nobody thinks it is abnormal. So in that sense that actual culture is transcendent, but what I will do is get to the actual meaning of the text in terms of what it has to say about men and women.

Now there are five arguments Paul brings out, let me read to you

1 Corinthians 11:2-5 (ESV) 2 Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. 3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, 5 but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven

Now here the idea is actually headship of men and over women. This whole idea is not really about the head veils, it is deeper than that. There are gender distinctions which is basically based on headship which is exemplified or symbolized by the covering. Now if you read the text, you might like most people have in the past interpreted well, he is giving you hierarchy; God, Christ, Man and Woman. Woman bottom of the ladder, just above the pig. That's what they think but if you actually look at the text a little bit closely, you will find that

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV) But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

So they are basically pairs. Man submits to Christ, Man is the head of woman and God is the head of Christ. So there are actually four pairs and what he is doing, he is differentiating the pairs, separating them and he is also basically ordering the pair. Now the interpretation of Kephale, which is Greek for head, three different types of interpretation, scholars argue about it all the time. Traditionally, the head means authority, supremacy or leadership. Others, more egalitarian will translate this as source, like a source of a river and thirdly Anthony Thiselton in his large commentary says, it is pre-eminent. They each have some evidence in Greek literature but the point is, not whether it is authority, supremacy, source or preeminence, it is what's the bottom-line.

Bottom-line, there is some degree of subjection because Ephesians says

Ephesians 5:21 (ESV) submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

And if you look at household codes in the New Testament, whenever Paul writes about, he talks about submission,

- Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands
- Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents
- Eph 6:5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters

It is all in one direction. You don't see submit to one another in Christ, like the master to submit to slaves, no, it doesn't go that way. So whatever you call it,

whether it is a head, whether it is a source or whether it is pre-eminence, the bottom-line is how does this actually work out in the couple's relationship. Now this idea of headship is dishonored by man's hair styles.

1 Corinthians 11:4-6 (ESV) Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,

1 Corinthians 11:14 (ESV) Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him,

This was shameful in that society. In this society, nobody really cares. Headship is dishonored by woman's hairstyles too.

1 Corinthians 11:4-7 (ESV) Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, 5 but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. 6 For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. 7

Which means for a woman if you look like any three of the above mentioned, it would be extremely shameful if you walk into church. So all these in Greek society would be shameful and you wouldn't be able to come in the church without us having a word with you about that. What is honorable in Greek society, woman has to have their hair up and always in a bun or with some sort of covering. So there is gender differentiation and distinctions are then shown, display honor or shame. So if you are short haired man or woman with a veil it is honorable. If you have any of other variations in that society, you are shameful.

So therefore Paul frowns upon you, if you wear any of these things there. The second argument is argument from created order

1 Corinthians 11:7-9 (ESV) For 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 was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

So here is an argument from created order. When men and women were created in Genesis 1:27, both of them reflected the image of God, but if you look in chapter 2, there is a microdissection of the way creation was done and it was

Genesis 2:18 (ESV) Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Genesis 2:21-22 (ESV) So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man

So actually if you see here very carefully, it was not an ideal situation for this to be very good, there has to be a man and a woman and a woman was created to basically help a man. So therefore it is from that design specification. So if you look at the old man with no hair and can hardly see and ugly, so he has to marry a beautiful lady that will make him look good. The glory of a man is woman. A woman makes a man look good. Proverb say

Proverbs 12:4 (ESV) An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.

So if you are greedy, you steal money and you subjugate people, you bring shame to his bones. So Benjamin Merkle concludes,

Instead, Paul appeals to creation to demonstrate the differences between men and women that God established from the beginning—and violating these distinctions brings shame instead of glory.

The third argument is from angels,

1 Corinthians 11: 10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Now commentators are all split as to what angels. Apparently, angels must be involved when you worship. So when your worship team is singing, they all sound very good because somebody in the background is augmenting the sound. There are three possible interpretations. Maybe priest, some believe there are horny priests because they look at the woman, if they are not covered they get very horny. Or horny angels or holy or guardian angels, we don't know.

Fourth one is argument from nature

1 Corinthians 11:14-15 (ESV) Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

So there is argument from the nature. When God created man, they have shorter hair than woman, woman have longer hair it is for their glory. So when you actually reverse the roles you are removing gender distinctions which bring shame to God's church.

Fifth is argument from practice

1 Corinthians 11:16 (ESV) If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

Which means all of the churches practice the same thing. Woman come in, they observe the decorum, they wear head veils and the man do not. So lets come to application. What Paul advocates? Paul advocates two things. One, gender distinctions and the other one is gender equality. We will deal with gender distinctions first. President Jimmy Carter, nine years ago in the Parliament of World Religions actually wrote,

- *"The belief that women are inferior human beings in the eyes of God, gives excuses to the brutal husband who beats his wife, the soldier who rapes a woman, the employer who has a lower pay scale for women employees, or parents who decide to abort a female embryo."*

So gender differences, whenever you talk about gender distinctions, it is always conceptualize as inequality and domination and in fact president Carter said,

"Religion is one of the basic causes of the violation of women's rights,"

So they blame the Bible, but actually you shouldn't blame the Bible, but you look at what the Bible says,

Genesis 2:18 (ESV) Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

The Hebrew word is a helper who is corresponding to him, not the same. But it is like a lock and key, they are complementary to him. That's what it means. So therefore, if she is going to be complementary to him or it is like a key fitting a lock basically, they are going to have different characteristics. Now gender distinctions are therefore designed by God are real and not as a result of the fall. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

Carol Gilligan, a professor of psychology at NYU actually looked at the psychology of males and females and find that naturally females tend to exhibit characteristics that would foster interdependence. They are very collaborative. Women work together, they always work together with other people, very collaborative. Men however, because they think they are superman, they always want to be independent. That's what they are like and if you look at male and female leadership styles.

FEMININE	MASCULINE
They are inclusive and relationship	Competitive and individualistic masculine mindset
Show vulnerability to build authentic trust and respect	Show invulnerability
Empathy	Lack of empathy

That's how man are brought up, man don't cry. So this is ingrained into us. Now the fall distorts our gender distinctions.

Gen 3:16 (NIV) I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

A woman's natural tendency is to strive for interdependence, her striving for independence is cursed and then it becomes dependence. A man's natural striving for independence become domination. That's what happens to them. So therefore the woman is cursed

The woman's curse was that she will always try to find her significance from a man in a world where men are cursed to always desire to dominate women.

It affects every single marriage, because we are all tainted by the fall. Here is a global survey. They looked at global views on equality of woman versus man. Almost 20,000 interviews published last year and you look at global views and Malaysian views and the top three things which woman are concerned about is sexual harassment, sexual violence and sexualization of woman in the media. Ironically, it is woman being dependent on man. Look at Carmen Diaz, she says, *"I think every woman does want to be objectified."*

So actually woman are playing into man's game, which is actually subjugation, which is the opposite, which is very ironical. Woman's equality have a long way to go in this world. American Association of University Woman, among postdoctoral applicants, *women had to publish three more papers in the most*

prestigious journals, or 20 more in the less-prestigious ones, to be considered as productive as male applicants

This is totally unfair. So there is great inequality for woman in this world. So therefore woman should be more like man. They grow their muscles, be as assertive, but there is a rebound affect. If woman start to be like man, competing in a man's world you must be self-assertive. When a woman is self-assertive she is called aggressive, ambitious or out for herself. When a man is self-assertive, he is confident and strong. This is double standards.

This is another study of professors. Female professors are more likely to be called emotional, annoying or unfair. They are very least likely to be called genius, interesting or influential. If you are good, they call you helpful and pleasant. They won't call you expert or experienced. Those are terms reserved for man. That's the co-reality in life. Then there are gender stereotypes. Then you have got gender distinctions between boys and girls. Boys must wear blue, girls will wear red. Hundred years ago in American society the man actually wear red because red is the sign of blood and man fight and spill blood, so we should wear red. Stereotypes change.

So certain roles are gender specific, but certain roles are not. Traditional roles have changed, the ideas have changed. Pope Francis, when you talk about complementarity you cannot be specific to particular jobs. He wrote,

When we speak of complementarity between man and woman in this context, let us not confuse that term with the simplistic idea that all the roles and relations of the two sexes are fixed in a single, static pattern. Complementarity will take many forms as each man and woman brings his or her distinctive contributions to their marriage and to the formation of their children – his or her personal richness, personal charisma. Complementarity becomes a great wealth. It is not just a good thing but it is also beautiful.

So we should do away with this fix static thing that is only blue for boys and red for girls and there are certain gender types which will determine what you do except for if you are going to get pregnant. So in the 19th century they use to think that men's brains and women's brains were completely different. They found there was differences. Men's brains on average 8% to 14% heavier than women. So therefore the man in the 19th century thought that they have more brain. There was a very famous study of 1400 MRI scans and there is work done by Israeli researcher. She looked at about 50,000 neuroscientific journals and she found out that there are few structural differences between men and women but there is a significant overlap between males and females. There is a

continuum of “femaleness” to “maleness,” in the entire brain. Majority of brains show a mosaic between male and female structures. Very very few brains are purely like all male, all female features and the male type brain can switch to female type brain under stress. So we can actually change. So this idea that we are fixed, each one fixed from a particular profession is actually wrong.

We shouldn't stereotype people, yet the danger is there is male and female complementarity which we believe in. On one hand, we shouldn't go to male domination which is patriarchy which we subjugate. On the other hand, the feminist will move in this direction where woman are more like man and then they become homosexual and they have got this idea called gender fluidity. We are now faced with a great challenge in our society where people think gender is a choice. You can decide what you want to be.

There was a survey in which it was asked this question, girls should be raised as girls and boys as boys, you agree or not. Most Asian countries believe girls should be raised as girls, boys should be raised as boys. But you come to Western countries and you will find most of them start to say that we can have a choice and you don't have to necessarily do that. This is a challenge to our society where gender distinctions are obliterated, and gender is a choice. But the Bible advocates as Paul advocates, use of head veils, why, because it is gender distinctions.

Then the other issue that we want to delve into, not only that man and woman are different and those differences are given by God innate and it glorifies him, but we are also equal.

Man and woman are equal. Look at the words,

Genesis 2:18 (ESV) Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

The word in Hebrew is Ezer, which is used 21 times in the Old Testament and 16 times out of the 21 refers to God. Three out of 21 times it refers to someone bailing you out. So basically obviously this person is not inferior. Psalm says,

Psalms 54:4 (ESV) Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Genesis was written by Moses. Moses uses the word, 'ezer' and in fact when Moses had two children,

Exodus 18:2-4 (ESV) Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh")

Moses uses the word 'Eli ezer' which means God is my helper. So in Moses eyes ezer does not denote a subordinate figure, it doesn't denote inferiority. It is a description of God's character, a strong helpful deliverer. Now if you look at gender equality.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 (ESV) Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

1 Corinthians 11:5 (ESV) 5 but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

Paul is saying that men and women are not independent of each other. You need each other and he allows women to pray and prophesize in public, whilst in ancient Greek society woman were not able to do that. This was revolutionary. In facts, Acts 2:17 says

Acts 2:17 (ESV) And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

So when the Holy Spirit comes upon all, they will all participate in ministry.

Galatians 3:27-28 (ESV) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

So therefore he also puts this argument of equality by headship.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV) But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Now we are talking about the trinity. In the trinity, the father sends the son, so is the father superior to the son. If you understand the trinity, the trinity is co-equal. You can have father, son and holy spirit as equal in essence. They are

God. But they have different roles. One plays the role of father, the one is son and the holy spirit. Then if you look at 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV) When all things are subjected to him, then the **Son himself will also be subjected to him** who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

So if it does not assault the dignity of Christ to be subject to the father. Why should it assault ours, it is a good question. Now different roles doesn't mean different essence. So basically the subjection rules are made, so that society works. It is the best formula, so that man and woman can work together. So basically different roles does not imply different value. So how can man and woman be equal and different in a fallen world, which is the most important question we need to ask.

Now the gospel makes a difference. The whole idea of gospel is, Jesus Christ come in the world and sacrificing his life to save ours. So the world looks for happiness through self-assertion, the Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment. So if you are in the world, you got to push your head, you got to beat everybody else, but in Christ the way forward is actually servanthood. Let's look at the Ephesian text

Ephesians 5:22-25 (ESV) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

So therefore God has taken the husband because he maybe a horrible fellow, and taken him out of the equation and he nearly becomes the target which you subject yourself to but for the lord. He removes it, so this reciprocal relationship where I submit to you if you are nice to me disappears completely away. You submit because you love and submit to God and you look at the husband.

... 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Husbands are commanded to love their lives. They are not commanded to compel submission. A man's job is to give yourself up. So therefore when we are talking about mutual submission, she submits to your direction, you submit your ambition to her good, which means before you decide what to do and where to migrate to or whatever it has to be for her good. So there is a mutuality in submission and sacrifice. So that's what the gospel brings into it. So equality is like, Tim Keller said it is like medicine, it is only useful when you are sick.

In Christ, He has given us everything. So gender distinctions, we should be looking at biblical womanhood and biblical masculinity. For woman here is how Peter describes,

1 Peter 3:2-4 (ESV) when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 4 but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious

You want to be precious to God, you want God to look at you and say, wow! A gentle quiet spirit. That's biblical femininity.

1 Timothy 2:0 (ESV) 10
...Attire with Modesty with self control and with good works

They actually bring your beauty out. What about the man? Biblical masculinity,

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV) Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

There is always this tension, they are different but they are actually equal. In the bible we have woman in different leadership roles. Queen Esther

Esther 4:16b Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

This is when the Jews were almost wiped out by the Persians from a diabolical plot and yet she sacrificed herself. She plunged ahead and actually implored her husband to spare the Jews. Then you have got another crucial time in history where the midwives were going to kill off all Jewish children

Exodus 1:17 (ESV) But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

At each crucial point in the life of Israel, a woman did the right thing and the right thing saved the nation more than one time. That's how important woman were. What about a time where life was really bad for the people of Israel, God raised up a woman in leadership, her name was Deborah. Collaborative kind of leadership, she got Barak to come along, it is an interdependent kind of style of

leadership which was quite different. Then in the New Testament, you see Mary Magdalene accompanied Jesus throughout his sufferings. All the men went away, Mary Magdalene was there through the suffering and the crucifixion, first to witness Jesus's resurrection, Jesus choose her to announce the news to the disciples, a place of a woman.

Pricilla and Phoebe actually took Apollos aside and explained to him scriptures better. Woman have a role. The challenge I want to leave us with today is that the Lord said, it is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him. You see man and woman alone or separated it is not good. It's the only time in the entire creation scheme that it is not good. It is good that man and woman are together and that each have a gender distinction and in that distinction it cannot be misinterpreted in such a way that woman are subject to man. We need to fight that. We need to be at the forefront, in many-many countries Christians are the forefront of the revolution that will give woman equality and that's what the church should have. We should of all people in the world show equality and honor to our sisters in Christ. We also cannot have a situation where our gender distinctions are discarded, where there is no male and there is no female and whichever sex you want to be or indeterminate you decide. Because the world is looking in its craziness, you need to look at some sort of standard.

Majority of people in the world nowadays say that woman's should have equal rights but they don't want woman to be same as man. Woman want to be treated as woman. Piers Morgan is one of the most belligerent atheist I ever come across. He was having this talk on British Television and also criticised what he called "a new fad". "I've got a six-year-old girl, she doesn't know what gender identity is, yet teachers are now asking a five-year-old child: 'How are you feeling today? Do you feel male or female?'" Morgan said. "It's not about judgment, it's about having some sort of boundaries."

The world is looking for boundaries. The world is looking at somebody to tell them, what is right and what is wrong, what is male and what is female because the world is totally lost and where is the world going to find these boundaries. The world is going to find these boundaries in the church. It is the way we treat our sisters in Christ. It is the way our sisters in Christ contribute to the growth of the church. Rodney Stark is the one who has done the most work in the world, documenting the growth of Christianity in the first 300 years and he started off with about 1000 people who were Christians after Christ's death in AD 40 and by the time AD 300 came along, there was 600 to 700 million Christians. The majority of the Roman empire became Christians by that time and the role of the woman in this growth is not insignificant.

- Very substantial surplus of females. No abortion or infanticide, sex bias in conversions
- Christian women had higher status within Christian subculture than pagans
- Women had leadership positions in the church
- Exogenous marriages with secondary conversions

Finally, we have a paradigm to show to the world. It is like a dance where a man lays his role and the female plays her role. Imagine the story of two young people meeting in church both in their 20s and they chitchat and they kind of like each other and the boy says to the girl, oh service is starting. There is a good spot why don't we sit there, the girl looks at the spot, okay I will sit with you. Sat down and they observed each other, how they worship and prayed. At the end of the service, they got up and he said, I am feeling hungry, can I treat you to lunch. The girl responds to. It is like a dance. The boy take a step and the girl responds.

So they start to walk to the restaurant and halfway there two gangsters come up to them and they say, I want your money and that girl too. Before they get there, the girl told the boy that she is a blackbelt. The boy lunges forward and sacrifices himself and pushes the girl back in front of the gangsters. They hit him and he is unconscious. The girl springs into the action and the two men have their teeth knocked out and they are unconscious as well.

The girl says that's the kind of guy I want to marry. There is an interplay here where he takes the initiative and say, sit there and she does not reject it. It is like a dance, she responds. It is not about ability or essence isn't it. It is about the man showing initiative, man showing a caring nature to look after you which a woman want. That's why woman don't want to be feminist. The last one is not about who knows tae kwon do and who doesn't, the fact that he is willing in his God-given impulse to protect the woman, ir-regardless of his lack of ability is what a woman for all the noise about feminism really wants to see in a man.

Now that's what should be played out in a church when there is male leadership and female reception, an affirmation of that strength. So therefore when the world looks at this dance, you see the marriage and the church are the only two places in the world where you got ringfence with this gender distinction and headship, so the world will see, it is a beautiful dance and when the world says, there got to be boundaries, they are going to look to the church. They are going to look at the way man treat their wives and wives treat their husbands in a church. They are going to see how the young people treat each other in the church as well, where we respect each other, consider each other equal and yet

maintain gender differences and we both minister together for the glory of gospel of Jesus Christ.