

# 1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 13

The Gospel and Women in Church

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

## A. On Covering the Head in Worship

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-6 (NIV)

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 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. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 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.

### 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 (NIV)

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

1. a) **Objective question. Select all that apply. Based on this passage and the video, what was shameful in the Greek culture of Corinth during the time this letter was written?**

- A. A man with short hair
- B. A man with long hair
- C. A woman with short hair
- D. A woman with long hair (covered)
- E. A man covering his head
- F. A woman covering her head
- G. A man without a head covering
- H. A woman without a head covering

b) **Discussion question. According to the video lecture, what was Paul advocating in this passage?**

Paul is advocating for gender distinctions in accordance with the culture.

DA Carson's commentary: Paul tells Christian wives to behave as married wives do in

Roman culture: a Christian Corinthian wife is to show respect for her husband by wearing the traditional head covering. A wife's respect for her husband (and vice versa) is expressed in different ways in different cultures.

**c) Discussion question. According to the video lecture, what was the conclusion and criticism of this passage?**

Conclusion: - Head coverings might reduce the impact of women prophesying in public avoiding the shame to the men and impairing the witness to their society

- It is a good compromise as it allowed women to speak up in ministry

Criticism: it may or may not make a difference in that male-dominated society

**d) Discussion question. Should we use this passage to insist on wearing head coverings in the church today?**

No, it is not a requirement to be insisted upon because, in our modern Malaysian culture, the absence of head coverings does not bring any cultural shame. In fact, the presence of head coverings might bring up more questions because of association with other religions in the country.

**e) Discussion question. What are some cultural shameful perceptions that Malaysians carry that other cultures around the world might not?**

- Shirts with low cuts in women (or even with men) might be seen as shameful in Malaysia but may be more normal in America, however short shorts in Malaysia are more acceptable in the Malaysian hot weather might be seen as too short in America.
- Some might perceive that it is shameful to wear slippers in church in the Sunday service in cities in churches but if you go to an orang asli church perhaps no one even has any shoes or slippers when they go to the church.
- Malaysian women can wear sleeve blouses or shirts in church but if a man wears a sleeveless shirt to Sunday service, it is perceived more negatively.
- In Scotland, men can wear kilts and in the Middle East men wear thobe which is long and flowing, very dress-like, but for the Chinese race, any form of skirt or dress-looking would be seen as shameful for men.
- In Korea men, especially celebrities wear make-up like lipstick and foundations. But in Malaysia, this would be perceived negatively.
- Some hair dye colours may be perceived more negatively. (light or bright colours)
- Share any other cultural observations you made!

## B. Created Order

### 1 Corinthians 11:7-12 (NIV)

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

#### 2. a) Discussion question. What are the implications of Paul's explanation of the Created Order?

DA.Carson commentary:

In the context of Gen 2:21-23, Paul focuses on the temporal sequence of the creation of Adam and Eve: the man was created first and reflects the glory of God; the woman was created second and reflects the glory of the man. This does not reduce the value of women. Paul is discussing here not the nature of males and females but the relationship between a husband and his wife. Since the woman is, from man's perspective, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23), she shares the man's image-of-God status.

The issue is not differences in nature or quality but the temporal sequence of God's creating man and woman (Gen 2:21-23). God created the woman from man (chronological priority) and for man (function allocation). In Roman society, wives were often considerably younger than their husbands, a fact that would have made it easy for Paul's readers in Corinth to follow his argument.

A married woman should take care not to be lured into behavioural patterns that compromise her husband's priority in marriage, as set by God's order of creation. That would happen if she appeared in public without the traditional head scarf.

**b) Objective question. Select the most appropriate answer. 1 Corinthians 11:10 says: "It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels." Which of the following is the possible reason in regard to the angels?**

- A. The angels are referring to priests (Rev 2:1)
- B. The angels refer to horny angels who are tempted by human women

- C. The angels refer to Holy or Guardian Angels (It is pleasing to them, mimics them Isaiah 6:2)
- D. All of the above could be possible, but we do not have the information to know for sure.

#### Takeaway

- A. There is a Difference in Creation Order (chronological) between Men and Women and therefore this implies that there is Gender Differentiation between Men and Women
- B. Despite Being Different, this does not mean one is Superior to the other, rather, both Husbands and Wives are Dependent on Each Other.

#### Case Study

##### Case 1 – Women have Lower Status in the Bible?

You were sharing the gospel with an atheist friend and she protests saying she does not believe in Christianity because women have lower status than men in the Bible.

1. Discussion question. Based on the background information below and what you have learned from the lesson today, how would you answer this friend?

#### Background Information

##### RECONSTRUCTING THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY: THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- Christian women had higher status within the Christian subculture than pagans
- Women had leadership positions in the church
- Exogenous marriages with secondary conversions

*Rodney Stark 1995 Sociology of Religion Vol 56*

**Judges 4:4-5 (ESV)** *Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

#### **Mary Magdalene**

*Accompanied Jesus suffering and crucifixion*

*First witness to Jesus' resurrection*

*Jesus chose her to announce the news to the disciples.*

### **Case 2 – Enforcing Differences vs Celebrating Differences**

“I do not believe those differences to be universal, prescriptive, or indicative of hierarchy. As an egalitarian, I believe that a truly complementary relationship is one in which differences are celebrated, but not forced.”

Rachel Held Evans (Egalitarian)  
NYT best-selling author

“The basic roles—of leader and helper—are binding, but every couple must work out how that will be expressed within their marriage.”

Kathy Keller (Complementarian)  
Author of *Meaning of Marriage*

**2. a) Discussion question. What aspect of gender difference do we celebrate according to Dr. Peter in the video lecture?**

**Male Female complementarity**

**Men: Leadership initiative, provision, and protection**

**Women: Affirm and receive this kind of leadership and provision and protection**

**b) Discussion question. Differences between males and females are not universal (not all men are naturally masculine and not all women are naturally feminine). There is such a thing as men with more feminine traits and women with more masculine or tom-boy personalities. Based on Dr. Peter and Rachel Evans, these differences are to be “celebrated, but not forced”. Are tom-boys and feminine men, going against God’s creation order of gender differentiation? Do they need to be forced into “retraining” to match their biological gender?**

### **Case 3 – God’s View on Gender Equality, Combating Sexism in Today’s Society**

According to the American Association of University Women, 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.

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An assertive man is called “confident” and “strong” whereas an assertive woman is more likely called “aggressive,” “ambitious,” or “out for herself.”

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Actually, studies have shown that women don’t talk more than men but societies have the perception women talk more:

Leaper's findings supported a review of 56 studies conducted by linguistics researcher Deborah James and social psychologist Janice Drakich published in a 1993 book on male and female conversational styles. Only two of the studies found women talked more than men, while 34 of them found men talked more than women...

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20131112-do-women-talk-more-than-men>

**3) Discussion question. Women today have more rights than women of the past. However, do Christians have a duty to promote God's idea of Gender Equality to the world or do we go with the cultural flow?**

**Case 4 – The Gender Scandal** *Excerpts from an article by Jordan Peterson*

**Question:** “Will egalitarian social policies in wealthy countries produce men and women who are more similar or more different?”

**Answer:** the more egalitarian and wealthier the country, the *larger* the differences between men and women in temperament and in interest.

**Summary:** If more freedom (equal opportunity) is allowed in a society, the differences between men and women become more apparent.

**Explanation given:** The best explanation, so far, for the fact of the growing differences is that there are two reasons for the differences between men and women: biology and culture. If you minimise the cultural differences (as you do with egalitarian social policies) then you allow the biological differences to manifest themselves fully.

**Conclusion:** Men and women are similar. But they are importantly different. The differences matter, particularly at the extremes, particularly with regard to occupational choice and its concomitants. There are going to be more male criminals, and more male engineers, and more females with diagnoses of depression and anxiety, and more female nurses. And there are going to be differences in economic outcome associated with this variance.

**Source:**

<https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/political-correctness/the-gender-scandal-part-one-scandinavia-and-part-two-canada/>

**4) Discussion question. Based on studies with tens of thousands of participants by prestigious journals, it is implied that when we remove cultural influence, the results show that men and women actually become more different, displaying God's biological design of gender difference. Do we as Christians want to influence our society to have more egalitarian social policies so that God's design of gender difference becomes more apparent?**