

SHOULD WOMEN WEAR A HEAD COVERING?

A Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Key Verse

“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.”

—1 Corinthians 11:3

Introduction

The subject of women wearing a head covering has been discussed and debated by Christians for generations.

Some churches strongly practice it. Others do not.

As we study this passage, it is important to understand that the larger issue in 1 Corinthians 11 is not merely cloth, hair length, or outward appearance. The deeper issue is God’s order, authority, submission, and proper conduct within the church.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that both men and women are to honor God in the way they live and worship.

In this chapter, Paul discusses:

- authority,
- submission,
- order,
- respect,
- and proper conduct in public worship.

The veil or covering was an outward sign connected to these deeper spiritual truths.

Summary of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

In this section, Paul teaches that God has established an order of authority:

- God is the head of Christ.
- Christ is the head of man.
- Man is the head of woman.

(1 Corinthians 11:3)

Paul explains that the actions of both men and women reflect upon the authority over them.

He gives several reasons connected to this teaching:

- woman is the glory of man (v-7),
- woman came from man (v-8),
- woman was created for man (v-9),
- and even the angels recognize God’s order (v-10).

At the same time, Paul also teaches that men and women depend upon one another and are both valuable in God's sight (v-11-12).

Finally, Paul warns that if believers become argumentative and contentious over such matters, they are missing the spirit of submission and peace that God desires in His church (v-16).

QUESTIONS

1. What major problem already existed in the Corinthian church, which is again seen in this section?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:16,18 and 1 Corinthians 1:10

2. This passage is about more than customs and hair length. What greater issue is Paul addressing?

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:40

3. What did Paul praise the Corinthians for in verse 2?

What were the "traditions" Paul delivered to them?

Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6

4. Why does Paul introduce the subject of authority and headship in verse 3?

5. Why does Paul teach that there is an order between man and woman?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Genesis 2:18-23; Genesis 3:16

What do these passages teach?

6. Under whose power and direction were the prayers and prophecies being spoken?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; 1 Corinthians 14:14-16, 26

7. Were there female prophets in the early church?

Read: Acts 2:17-18; Acts 21:8-9

Where were prophecies spoken?

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:17-19

If a woman publicly spoke a message from God, what misunderstanding could arise?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:11-12

What outward action was she to take to show submission and proper order?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:5-6,10

8. When a woman prayed or prophesied, was she taking authority over men, or obeying God by speaking His message?

What did the veil or covering symbolize?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:3

9. What does the “head” symbolize throughout Scripture?

Read: Genesis 3:15; Psalm 68:21; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15

10. Why would it be improper for a man to cover his head while praying or prophesying?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:7

Why should a woman cover her head?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:7-10

Verse 7b

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

11. What does the phrase “because of the angels” mean?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6

12. How was mankind created in two stages?

Read: Genesis 1:26-29; Genesis 2:18-25

In spite of these differences, what still exists between male and female?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

13. Who established the roles and order between men and women?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:12

14. Why is this issue deeper than simply wearing a veil?

What does Paul ultimately want believers to recognize?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:3

Why then does the veil become important?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:13-15

15. Should believers be able to judge wisely concerning these matters?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:13; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

16. Did God command only a veil and long hair, or did He command submission and order, with these being outward expressions?

Was the veil already part of the Corinthian culture before Paul arrived?

17. Is long hair on a man always sinful?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:14; Numbers 6:1-21; Judges 13:5,7

Is short hair on a woman always sinful?

Was Paul discussing exact hair length, or the appearance of masculinity and femininity?

18. Paul mentions two coverings for women. What are they?

19. If believers become argumentative and contentious over coverings, what spiritual truth are they damaging?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:16

Final Thoughts

This passage should lead believers to humility, respect, order, and submission to God.

Sadly, Christians have often divided over this subject instead of showing grace and love toward one another.

The greater issue in 1 Corinthians 11 is not merely cloth or hairstyles. It is the attitude of the heart toward God's authority and proper conduct within the church.

Whatever convictions believers hold on this subject, they should:

- seek truth from Scripture,
- walk in humility,
- avoid pride,
- and strive to maintain peace and unity in Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

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