**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-29-2023
Should Women Cover Their Heads?**

How many of you are enjoying the football playoffs this year? A lot depends on if your team is still in it, I suppose. I think if you are an Eagles fan like Paul Hoffman or Betty Putt, you are definitely enjoying the playoffs so far. Hopefully they will continue to enjoy them after today.

Now, I enjoy sports, including football. But even though I enjoy the game, my knowledge and understanding of the game is rather limited. While I do understand some things, there is a lot that I do not. This is particularly true when it comes to the X’s and O’s of play calling.

This is similar to my daughters’ gymnastics and dance. I enjoy them, but there are still a number of things that I just don’t understand.

And this all makes sense, as I have never played football, at least outside of gym class and with friends. Nor have I ever done gymnastics or taken dance lessons.

And I haven’t studied any of these things in depth, although I am learning some things.

In some ways, I see parallels between my superficial understanding of football and gymnastics and dance and how the Bible is often misunderstood.

Now, to be clear, there are many things from the Bible that are very straightforward and easy to understand. But, there are also many things that are more difficult for people to understand without studying the context of a certain passage. As one of my professors, Dr. Michael Heiser, often says, “Context is king.”

Today we are going to be looking at one of the most misunderstood, and dare I say, hairy, passages in all of Scripture. And it is misunderstood because we read it through 21st century western eyes, rather than first century middle-eastern eyes.

But it is important as Christians to not ignore or dismiss the more confusing passages. For every verse of Scripture is meant to be life-giving and a blessing if we understand it rightly.

So, let’s buckle up and please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

**2I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+11%3A2-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28604a)**] and the head of Christ is God. 4Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6For 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.**

**7A man ought not to cover his head,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+11%3A2-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28608b)**] since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+11%3A2-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28611c)**] head, because of the angels. 11Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.**

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

Now, looking at this passage with 21st century lenses, we may find ourselves very confused and perhaps angered by this passage. It appears on the surface that Paul is looking down his nose at women and telling them that men are better or more important. And that women needed to wear head coverings in order to show that they are inferior and submitted to men.

This, as you might expect has lead to some very different responses to this passage. For some, this has led to women wearing head coverings still today in many places. Under this view, this inspired instruction that Paul gives is a universe command to be following at all times and places.

For others, passages like this have given people a false understanding of Paul. From this and a few other misunderstood passages, Paul is portrayed as a male chauvinist pig. In fact, there have been Christian pastors and leaders that have basically stopping preaching and teaching on Paul because of passages like this.

But the question that we really need to ask is what is Paul really getting at here? What is he saying in the 1st century context of the middle-eastern and Mediterranean part of the world? What is he trying to correct? What was making the Corinthian church a church gone wild in this regard?

Paul is focusing on how men and women were to properly dress at worship gathering. He was particularly correcting some of the women in Corinthian Church that were dressing rather inappropriately when they were gathering for worship.

Truly, the key to unlocking this passage is to better grasp how physiology and biology was understood at that time. And the perhaps surprising view that was widespread in that part of the world at that time was that once a girl arrives in adolescence or puberty, the hair on their head is then considered a private area.

I admit that this sounds odd today, modern medical advances have debunked this more primitive understanding of human physiology. I plan to have an email sent out with an article and a video link that explains in far more detail the reasons behind this type of thinking that were the norm in that part of the world in the first century.

But for today’s purpose, this important discovery on the context of the head covering helps us to make proper sense of the passage.

The passage is really about the importance of modesty for Christians, especially when they are gathered for corporate worship of God. Apparently, the concept of modesty and value of modesty was a real growth area for some of the people in Corinth.

Remember, Corinth was very pagan with a low regard of the body. Immodestly was the norm.

But the church is not called to be the same as the world. In that culture, for a woman to have her head uncovered would be the equivalent of having an intentional wardrobe malfunction today. Definitely not something to celebrate or to strive for.

Paul even mentions the angels as well. This is most likely a reference to Genesis 6:1-4, which describes how some of the angels rebelled against God by coming to earth and taking on human wives. This led to all kinds of problems. And Paul clearly believed that it was not out of the question for this type of scenario to happen again.

So it is a call to modesty and appropriate clothing for men and women and when gathered for worship.

The passage also clearly differentiates between men and women. Paul is not saying that men are better in any way than women, but he is saying that men and women are not the same.

Paul also alludes to Christian husbands being called to take the lead in spiritually guiding their families. This doesn’t in any way speak of male superiority, but simply that God desires that husbands lead in the home.

In light of better grasping the 1st century context for this passage, the big question, then, is what are we to make of it for today?

**The biggest takeaway is that God’s calls His people to be modest, especially when they gather today in worship**. The focus of worship is to be on the LORD, not on one another.

In light of advances in medical understanding regarding physiology and biology, and knowing that most of the world now understands that a women’s hair is not a private area, Christian women should not feel guilt or pressured to wear hair coverings. You are free to practice modesty without a hair covering.

A few other points need to be made.

First, just because you are free as a woman to not wear a hair covering does not mean that there may be times that it may be fitting to wear a hair covering. This would be particularly true if you travel to a place in the world where your witness for Christ would be hindered because people would close themselves off to hearing you if you are not wearing a head covering. You are free to not wear it, but for their benefit, it may be a right that you may choose to not exercise, for the benefit of others.

A second point is this, men are not off the hook here. Modesty is to be practiced by all of God’s people – male and female. We are all called to dress in ways that are not provocative and inappropriate.

Third, while modesty should be important for all God’s people, we need to remember that there are those that turn those commands from the Lord into a list of rules and specific do’s and don’ts. This can get unhealthy and legalistic and we need to be aware of this danger as well.

Fourth, this passage is a reminder that while there is no superiority or inferiority between women and men, there is also differences. This is definitely a growth area for our culture today, which increasingly is attempting to blur a distinction between men and women.

Sadly, while general dysphoria was extraordinately uncommon through modern history, in recent years it has skyrocketed. In fact, in the U.S. there has been an increase of over 1,000%. And in Britain, the increase is 4,000%. These dangerous statistics are undoubtedly the results of the concerted effects that have been made in western society to move away from a biblical and self-evident and scientific understanding of gender in favor of an woke, highly progressive view. This has led to all kinds of problems, from the breakdown of the family to the increase in self-harm among many people.

As Christians, we are called to stand up against this. We are to pray and speak truth in love, when gender confusion is being promoted. And we are to especially advocate for the children being brainwashed in unhealthy ways.

So, while in one sense we have moved beyond the more primitive understanding of physiology and should understand the head covering issue in light of this, at the same time our western culture today has taken a big step back from the first century in that now many people are trying to convince us that anyone can be a man or woman if they want.

Fifth, this passage is a reminder that Christian marriages in which the men are actively leading are God’s ideal. A look at the world today reveals that families are more likely to stay connected to the church when the father in the home is actively engaged in the church. Again, this is not about male superiority, but that Christian men are called to be active spiritual leaders in the household.

Finally, I hope that this understanding of what Paul was getting at helps us to remember that Paul was not a chauvinist. In fact, he was quite the opposite. He supported women in ministry and consistently empowers women and equally important in God’s church.

Additionally, may today’s passage remind us that when we come to more confusing texts in the Bible, we need not fear. Let us remember that context is king and when we grasp in the original context, we will find that every Scripture is a wonderful word of life.

Resources: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Irreversible Damage – By Abigail Shrier

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv35ZvqK84U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj6Wv-1I4v4&t=351s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fn9Q_YMSfA4> --- This video to be emailed out by the church office to help in further explaining this difficult passage

[file:///C:/Users/TIM%20KLEIN/Desktop/Martin-Pauls-argument-from-nature-for-the-veil-in-1-Corinthians-11.13-15-testicle-instead-of-a-head-covering-1.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/TIM%20KLEIN/Desktop/Martin-Pauls-argument-from-nature-for-the-veil-in-1-Corinthians-11.13-15-testicle-instead-of-a-head-covering-1.pdf)

Troy W. Martin- Paul’s Argument From Nature For the Vein in 1 Corinthians 11:13-15: A Testicle Instead of a Head Covering

