

Heads and Head-Coverings

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[0 : 0 0] So this is one of those passages that terrify pastors and make them wish they weren't in the Bible so that they don't have to preach it and then make all their congregation flee the church.

But that's the benefit of doing expository preaching where we just go through a book is that it forces us to submit to God's Word and not the other way around. And we have to preach because it's God's Word and it teaches us.

And let me start by telling you about Carol Gilligan. She is a psychologist and ethicist and she was a pioneer in the feminist movement.

She teaches full-time at New York University now and part-time at University of Cambridge, a busy woman. But for 35 years, she was a professor at our very own Harvard University.

Many of you studied there or have studied there. And while teaching there, she wrote a groundbreaking book called *In a Different Voice*, Psychological Theory in Women's Development.

[1 : 0 5] Unlike her strident feminist contemporaries who argued that gender differences are superficial and that they are social constructs that need to be erased, Gilligan pressionaly argued that gender differences are irreducible.

And she criticized Lauren Kohlberg, her colleague at Harvard, who argued that women do not reach the highest levels of moral reasoning as men do. And she disputed his claim and pointed out the fact that he reached his conclusion only because he was favoring the exact kind of moral reasoning that privileged males.

For example, he focused on men's moral reasoning centers around abstract principles of rights and rules. But women's moral reasoning generally centers around contextual responsibilities and relationships.

Gilligan also argued that while men associate maturity with independence, which has an initiatory outward orientation, that women associate maturity with interdependence, which has a receptive inward orientation.

So some people called Gilligan's brand of feminism the difference feminism, which calls for the equal recognition of women in their distinctively feminine attributes.

[2 : 1 7] Though many feminists today still try to minimize gender distinction, it's Gilligan's voice that has proven to be more oppression and enduring. And there is a reason for this.

There's a reason why, despite loud protests to the contrary, most people intuitively believe that men and women are very different. There's a reason why men and women find each other utterly incomprehensible, yet strangely irresistible.

And that's because God created one and the same humanity, but with two different genders. That's because God created men and women to be equal in dignity, but different and distinct in their duties.

Men and women are so alike, yet so different, because they are intended to reflect the diversity and unity within the triune God himself. God designed men and women, to put it shortly, to complement each other, to complete each other.

1 Corinthians 11, 2-16 speaks of this reality, and it teaches us this, this is the main point, that Christians ought to worship in a way that displays the complementarian relationship between men and women.

[3 : 27] And Paul proves this by appealing to three different things. First, he appeals to culture in verses 2-6. Second, he appeals to creation in verses 7-12. And third, he appeals to consciousness in verses 13-16.

In verses 2-6, Paul first argues on the basis of culture that Christians ought to worship in a manner that honors the complementarian relationship between men and women. Having just concluded his previous passage by telling the Corinthians to imitate him, to be imitators of me as I am of Christ, and knowing that he is about to launch into another series of corrections in chapters 11-14 of the Corinthians' misbehavior, he kind of encourages them and stops to win their goodwill here in verse 2.

He says, So they are remembering and imitating Paul in some things, and they are maintaining at least some of the traditions that Paul delivered to them.

So he's acknowledging this, but he must quickly turn to the way in which Corinthians have been deviating from the traditions that he delivered to them. So he says in verse 3, Note that Paul's not trying to prove this point.

Rather, he takes it for granted that there are three levels of heads. The head of a man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

[4 : 59] So Paul could have put this in a logical ascending order. For example, he could have said, The head of woman is her man, and the head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.

That ordering would have made more sense to us, but Paul opts for instead a chiasmic ordering. So this is literally a device that ancient writers used, where they have two similar elements on the outside, and they have a middle element that's different, and that sandwich structure is intended to bring attention to what's in the middle.

Like a sandwich, right? What's the thing you need to focus on in a sandwich? It's not the bread, it's the meat, right? So that's the idea. So it's a sandwich structure. So for Paul here, the central issue is not that God the Father is the head of Christ, or that Christ is the head of man, but the main concern here is that of the husband's headship over his wife.

And so he says, that's why he puts this in the middle to bring it to our attention. But if that's Paul's main concern, that what does Paul mean that the head of a wife is her husband? What does Paul mean by head?

In the English, we use the word head metaphorically to suggest authority and source. First, for example, when the newspaper says that the heads of state gather for a summit, it means that the leaders of the various states and governments met together.

[6 : 20] So the word head, in this sense, means those in positions of authority. And this meaning is confirmed by the actual appearance of the word authority in verse 10, which says, that is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.

Just as the literal physical head directs the body and is in turn supported by the body, the metaphorical head functions similarly with authority and responsibility and is in turn supported and helped by the metaphorical body.

Second, we use the word head to mean source. So for example, when we say head of the river, we mean the source of the river, the point from which the rest of the river flows.

This meaning is confirmed by verse 8, which says, for man was not made from woman, but woman from man. So the word head combines the concept of both authority and source.

Now at this point, of course, people might balk and say, why can't women be heads? Why are men heads? Because women are not in fear to men in any way.

[7 : 25] And the fact that women are not in fear to men is, I think, and I would argue is an empirically verifiable and indisputable fact. But that's why it is significant that scripture roots the man's headship and the woman's helpship in the context of the Trinitarian relationship within the Godhead.

Paul surrounds the statement that the head of a wife is her husband with these statements. The head of every man is Christ and the head of Christ is God. Paul said something very similar earlier in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 23.

He said, you are Christ's and Christ is God's. And by God, Paul means God the Father. And by this, of course, Paul doesn't mean, you know, that Christ is not God and that only God the Father is God.

Paul clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, which says that there is one God but three persons within that one deity. And so in 1 Corinthians 12, 4-6, he teaches the Trinity clearly.

He says, now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

[8 : 34] So Paul identifies the three persons of the Trinity as the Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. And they all belong to the one Godhead, which is what accounts for the unity and diversity within the gifts of the church.

So while there is equality and oneness in the divine essence, there is distinction and diversity and order in their employment. Even though the three persons of the Trinity share the same dignity, they have different duties.

For instance, the Father sends the Son and the Son sends the Holy Spirit and the Spirit glorifies the Son and the Son glorifies the Father. The Father is the originator, the Son is the mediator, and the Spirit is the effector, the fulfiller.

The Father is the giver, the Son is the deliverer, and the Spirit is the gift. The persons of the Trinity are inseparable yet distinguishable. They are distinct yet the same, same Godhead.

This is crucial to understand because unless we understand this relationship within the triune Godhead, we cannot make sense of the relationship between man and woman. Because analogically, in a similar way as within the Trinity itself, men and women are inseparable yet distinguishable.

[9 : 49] They share the same humanity but have different genders. They have the same essence, the humanity, but different employment.

They have the same dignity but have different duties. Same worth, but different works to do in God's kingdom. So the fact that God the Father is the head of Christ does not mean that Christ is in any sense less God than the Father.

And I will return to this verse later, but for now it's sufficient to recognize that this serves as the theological foundation for Paul's following arguments. So having established this, Paul appeals to culture to argue that Christians opt to worship in a way that displays the complementarian relationship between man and woman.

And there's a particular manner in which the Corinthian church was worshipping that concerned Paul, and he makes that explicit in verses 4 to 5. Read it with me. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, 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.

So first, Paul addresses the man. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. Now the context in view is that of public worship.

[11 : 03] Chapters 11 to 14 all deal with issues that surround the corporate worship of the church. And we know that Paul has public worship context in mind because he mentions prophecy, right?

Because we know from 1 Corinthians 14.3 that one who prophesies speaks for people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. So even though prayer can be private, it can be directed privately to God, prophecy is by its very nature oriented toward others.

It's public gift. For that reason, because Paul specifies praying and prophesying, we can know that he's speaking of, thinking of the corporate worship context. And in the Greek, it says literally for the man, every man who prays or prophesies with down from the head dishonors his head.

What does down from the head mean? And I think the translation gets it right here because that exact expression is used in Esther 6.12 to say that Haman, after being shamed by the king, purred to his house mourning and with down from the head.

And that down from the head, that Greek expression translates the Hebrew word that means to cover one's head. And all 59 of the English translations that I had access to translates this phrase as referring to some kind of external covering over the head.

[12 : 17] And I think that's the most likely interpretation. And Paul is saying that if a man were to cover his head while prophesying or praying, this would bring dishonor to his head.

But which head exactly will he dishonor? Because that's not exactly clear, right? Would the man dishonor his own head? Or will he dishonor Christ, who is his head?

According to verse 3. On the one hand, it makes sense that he will dishonor his own head because in verse 14, Paul uses the illustration of hair to argue that just as it is disgraceful for a man to wear long hair, since his head is not supposed to be covered, so it is dishonorable for him to wear a head covering.

There he says, If a man wears long hair, it is a disgrace for him. And the word disgrace is a synonym of the word dishonor that's used in verse 4. So in verse 14, the man is clearly disgracing himself, so it makes sense to think that by wearing a covering during this context of praying and prophesying in corporate worship, the man will dishonor his own head.

But on the other hand, it also makes sense, given the immediately preceding context in verse 3, which tells us explicitly that the head of every man is Christ. So it seems likely that every man who prophesies or prays with his head covered dishonors his metaphorical head, that he dishonors Christ.

[13 : 39] And in the end, I don't think these two options are mutually exclusive. I think both of them are intended here. There is contextual warrant for both. The man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors both his own head and Christ, who is his head.

Men were forbidden from covering their heads in public when they were praying and prophesying because this was considered irreverent behavior that dishonored Christ, similar to wearing a baseball cap, you know, in a wedding or during the national anthem.

With all that said, even though Paul mentions this for the sake of fairness and completeness, this doesn't seem to be the main issue that he's getting at in the context of the Corinthian church.

Because if you look at verse 10, the command to cover the head is directed specifically toward the women of the church. And the emphasis of this passage falls on the woman's conduct. And I think the reason for that is because the men weren't necessarily doing this.

They weren't covering their heads, but the women were uncovering their heads. And so I think Paul is addressing a specific issue. So in a similar way, in chapter 6, Paul specifically addressed men because they were the ones committing sexual immorality by going to prostitutes.

[14 : 46] So here he's addressing a particular issue that pertains to women. Even though it does pertain to men, it just wasn't an issue for them because they weren't trying to cover their heads during worship. So Paul continues in verse 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.

The ESV, if you have the ESV translation, which is the one we're using, it translates this as every wife. But there's a footnote next to the word wife if you check it.

And if you go down to the footnote to check it, it tells you that the wife could also mean woman because the Greek word for wife is exactly the same as the Greek word for woman. And I think NIV translates this as every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.

I think that's more likely the intended meaning, the translation, as the following verses make clear, because there's a general principle here that applies to all women, not just to married women.

And of course, only a married woman could dishonor her husband, who is her head. So it makes sense to understand particular parts of this passage referring to wives specifically. But there is a general principle by which women who do not do this would dishonor herself and dishonor Christ, who is her bridegroom and lord.

[16 : 06] And we'll see that more clearly as we go. And a woman, interestingly enough, in contrast to a man, brings dishonor to her head not by covering her head like the man, but by uncovering her head, the exact opposite of a man.

And what exactly is meant by an uncovered head is somewhat disputed, mainly because, as archaeologists and historians have found out, there are a lot of images and statues of women from Paul's time.

And some of them depict women as wearing veils or some kind of head coverings, but a lot of them also depict them as not wearing anything on their heads, just with their heads tied up over their head.

And so because of that, people argue that Paul cannot possibly be talking about covering a woman's head, and he must be talking about loosed hair, because there was stigma against having loosed hair, because it was associated with adulterous women, or culturally, basically, inappropriate behavior.

I think that's plausible, possible, and I've spent a lot of time studying this, but I do think that the way the ESV has a translator as uncovered head, I think is more likely, and for this reason.

[17 : 18] And the main reason, really, is that the word uncovered is simply the negative form of the Greek verb that means to cover or veil. And whenever the word occurs in Greek literature, it almost always refers to covering something or hiding something.

So, for example, in Isaiah 6.2, when the angels encounter the glory of God in the temple, he says that they cover their faces. Genesis 38.15, Tamar covers her face like a prostitute.

And so the evidence suggests, and other ancient Greek literature as well, suggests that this is referring to some kind of head covering. But if that's the case, then why are there so many images of women in this culture that are not wearing anything?

It seems to have been perfectly normal for them. And why is Paul concerned about this? And I think there's a simple answer to that, and it's that Paul lived in a time when the head covering conventions were in a state of flux.

And more and more women were beginning to reject head coverings. And also the women that are depicted on coins and memorialized on statues, which archaeologists have found, are generally prominent noble women and empresses.

[18 : 26] And they're given to far more progressive and elaborate adornments and styles, kind of like the Hollywood actresses of our time. And so the fact that these rich and famous women were not covering their heads in public does not mean that this was uncontroversial.

And I think an illustration might be helpful to understand what's going on in this time. It's when the French engineer, Louis Rear, he designed the bikini in 1946. It was so controversial that it was banned in some parts of France, as well as all of Spain, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Australia, as well as some parts of some of the states in the United States.

Only the most avant-garde woman, only the most radically progressive woman, mostly, it turns out, upper-class European woman, became early adopters of the bikini. And it didn't become a common swimwear until two decades later in the mid-1960s.

But nevertheless, if archaeologists and historians from the future were to study the 20th century, and they would look at pictures and movies and drawings of women from those times, they would conclude that as early as the 1950s or early 1960s, that the bikinis were commonly accepted and popular.

And the reason why they would say that is because prominent actresses of the time, like Bridgette Bardot, Ursula Andress, Raquel Welch, they're so old, I don't know who any of these people are, but they wore them and popularized them, right?

[19 : 53] And so because of them, their images of them, these iconic so-called images of them in bikinis proliferate all over the world. And so I think that's kind of similar to what's happening in Paul's time. So because this was a convention that was in cultural flux, we see a lot of counter-examples of women not wearing it, but there still seems to have been a general convention where women were expected to wear veils, especially in a traditional modest context.

And I think this may explain Paul's lenient stance here too. Notice that Paul doesn't require that women wear head coverings at all times in public, right? But only when they are publicly praying or prophesying in the context of corporate worship, right?

And so this is why similar exhortations about women's attire in 1 Timothy 2.9 and 1 Peter 2.3, they assume that women's hairstyles would be visible in the corporate worship context. So that tells us that Paul wasn't trying to say every woman should be doing this at all times, but rather, especially in a context that requires particular modesty and presentability, and when you're presenting something, sharing something in a context of corporate worship, that they should cover their heads.

Still, you might wonder why Paul required head coverings for women at any point of the worship service, since we live in a society where women generally do not cover their heads. This is difficult for us to understand.

But in Paul's cultural context, head coverings for women were a function, like I said, of modesty and privacy, and I think it's helpful for us to understand this, because women's hair in this era, this is really fascinating, was considered one of the most seductive parts of the woman's body.

[21 : 29] So because of, so you can look at this from a second century Christian writing called the Apocalypse of Peter. So the Apocalypse of Peter is not Christian scripture, rather it's more like an imaginative writing, and it's written in a framework where basically Peter receives a vision from Christ, and Christ takes Peter to heaven and hell and tells him about the different aspects of heaven and hell.

This is fictional writing, it's not scripture. It's similar to Dante's Inferno, or a divine comedy, where Dante is taken by Virgil through hell and purgatory in heaven, and is told about the different aspects of it.

And what's fascinating is in Apocalypse of Peter, chapter 7, 22, Peter is told that the wicked people are punished eternally by being hung by their offending parts. And those who blaspheme are hung by their tongues, and the men who committed adultery are hung by their genitals, and interestingly, adulterous women are hung by their hair.

Now, this is why head coverings, especially for married women who are no longer available to men, were considered essential in this culture. Judith Sebesta, who's a professor of classics and history at University of South Dakota, she specializes in Roman women and wrote a book, or contributed to a book called The World of Roman Costume, and she writes this, quote, The Roman matron signified her modesty and chastity with the traditional costume.

It consisted of her distinctive dress, the woolen stola, which was worn over a tunic, the protective woolen bands, which dressed her hair, and the woolen pala, or mantle, which was used to veil her head when she went out in public.

[23 : 09] And then she makes this insightful observation. He says, To modern women of Western countries, the Middle Eastern custom of veiling women seems to signify social inequality and even inferiority.

To modern women of the East, it is a symbol of their honor and of the sanctity and privacy of their family life. For a married woman, to uncover her head in public was traditionally understood as a sign of her withdrawing herself from her patronage.

It's basically, her uncovering herself in public was seen as indecent exposure that signaled her sexual availability. And that's why it's considered so inappropriate. And for this reason, culturally, it was considered appropriate and seemingly for women to cover their heads in public.

But Paul's primary concern is not women's head covering per se, but that they wear head coverings as a way of distinguishing themselves from men. And so that's an important idea to get, that Paul is enjoining head coverings not because of the merits of head coverings themselves, in and of themselves, but because Christian men and women should keep the cultural markers that distinguish men from women and women from men.

That's why it says in verses 5 to 6, read with me, every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

[24 : 28] 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. Once again, I think woman is a better translation than wife here, because in Paul's day and even in our time to a lesser degree, it was considered shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or shaven, because to do so is to blur the distinctions between genders.

So Paul appeals to a more widely accepted example in order to argue his point. It's shameful for a woman to cut her hair short or shave her head because it does violence to her sense of womanhood and femininity.

In the same way, when a woman refuses to cover her head, when publicly praying or prophesying, she defies the cultural conventions of womanhood and thereby distorts the male and female relationship.

For this reason, Paul argues, let her cover her head. He's appealing to the culture of his time to argue that Christians ought to worship in a way that displays the complementarian relationship between man and woman.

In this case, of course, the all-important question, should Christian women today cover their heads publicly when they're publicly praying or prophesying in the context of public worship?

[25 : 44] That's a difficult question to answer. I've studied this in the past, this passage in the past, and I studied it for another 25 hours or so just this past week, and frankly, when I started out my studies this week, I was sure that head covering is an outdated practice that the Bible does not require, and I began the study even with a dismissive attitude toward Christians and Christian denominations who believe that head covering is required.

But as I studied further, I see that they have good reason for what they believe, even though I still don't agree with them. I see that they have good reason for what they believe.

And all the early church fathers as well as the Protestant reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, as well as many faithful pastors of more recent memory like Charles Spurgeon, John Murray, and R.C. Sproul believe that men uncovering their heads and women covering their heads during public worship was a practice that should continue to be observed.

And I believe there is a distinct possibility that they are right. And if they are right and this practice is an abiding principle, then it would only apply in the context of public worship, not just public worship in general, but when you're sharing in front of a whole congregation during worship.

On balance, I'm still of the belief that the custom of head covering is culturally relative and no longer binding on us. But I do not, I hold that view now much more tentatively and humbly than I have in the past and I want all of you to wrestle with this and do what you think scripture teaches.

[27 : 20] And the reason why this practice of head covering I think doesn't apply to us today is because Paul was not championing head covering in and of itself. As you can see, if that were the case, maybe he would require women to wear it at all times when they were in public, but he requires it only specifically in the context of public worship when they are sharing, praying, praying, or prophesying.

But he seems to be advocating this custom for the sake of maintaining the complementary relationship between men and women in the context of public worship. And this is why, you know, so Paul is basically affirming a changing custom for the sake of preserving an unchanging principle.

And since in our cultural context the complementary relationship between men and women is not displayed in the uncovering and covering of our heads, we need to consider how we can preserve that same unchanging principle in our cultural context.

So there is no need to perpetuate a culturally, basically, an inculturated practice that no longer communicates the same principle that Paul intended to communicate. An example might be helpful here.

So look at John 13. You don't have to go there. It's the Last Supper. And Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. And then he says to his disciples, Do you understand what I have done to you?

[28 : 33] You call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

So if Jesus said to his disciples, You also should do just as I have done to you, does that mean we should wash one another's feet? Then how come Christians don't wash one another's feet anymore?

Jesus and his disciples lived in a desert climate and a culture where people wore shoddy sandals. So walking around the dusty roads in their times inevitably made one's feet filthy by the end of the day.

So it was customary for hosts to arrange for the foot washing of their guests. Of course the foot washing was considered a demeaning task so only slaves were thought worthy to do such a task. But Jesus does it himself and washes his disciples' feet as a gesture of humility and love.

And that is the abiding principle that lies behind the practice of the cultural practice of washing one another's feet. And so foot washing was symbolic and we know that because Jesus didn't do this all the time.

[29 : 42] This is the only time he did it and to show to teach as a way of teaching his disciples. And so the foot washing in and of itself is not what is required of Christians but the posture of humble service that is required of Christians.

So likewise because this context that we're looking at here in 1 Corinthians 11 suggests that Paul's commending a practice for the sake of the principle so even if we don't go out to buy headscarves today we need to think about how we can worship in a way that displays that complementing relationship between men and women.

How we can preserve the unchanging principle. I thought about this a little bit and at the very least I think that means men should not wear a dress and that women should not wear a suit and tie when they lead prayers of the people during the service.

I think it may also mean that a man should not wear his hair long like a woman and that a woman should not sport a crew cut when they read scripture publicly during the service and vice versa. I understand that this is a difficult message to accept for our time.

Just please stay with me because I know that it's hard for you to hear but if it's hard for you to hear it it's probably harder for me to say it because I mean I don't want to you know just scare everybody away in church but I teach it nevertheless because I know that God's word is true and that his vision for us is better and more beautiful than our own visions of how life should be.

[31 : 13] So in verses 2-6 Paul appealed to the culture to teach that Christians ought to worship in a way that displays a complementary relationship between man and woman. That's the longest point so stay with me.

Now in verses 7-12 Paul roots the complementary relationship between man and woman in creation. He writes in verse 7 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.

Now at first glance this appears incredibly offensive and misogynistic but if we consider the verse more carefully that is not at all the case. First Paul is certainly not saying that only man and not a woman is created in the image of God.

Genesis 1-27 teaches very clearly so God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him male and female he created them.

All of humanity male and female is created in the image of God and that's why Paul's very careful not to say here in this verse that woman is the image and glory of man.

[32 : 19] He just says that woman is the glory of man because the woman is not made in the image of man. Man and woman are both made in the image of God. And then secondly Paul does not mean by the statement that only man brings glory to God and that woman can only bring glory to man and not to God.

What Paul has in view is the ordering of the relationship. Certainly both man and woman are accountable to God and both man and woman bring glory to God. He just told all men and women in the previous at the end of chapter 10 that we should do all things to the glory of God that includes both men and women.

But what he's referring to is the fact that God created the woman to help the man in his mission. Genesis 2-18 God says it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.

In Genesis 1 God saw that all of his creation was good. The only thing in the creation narrative that he's called not good is the man being alone. So that man was lonesome and incomplete on his own.

So God creates a woman. And when the first man meets the first woman in Genesis 2-23 the man erupts in poetic praise and he says this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.

[33 : 37] For this reason the very existence of the woman is to the man's glory. It's like Proverbs 12-4 which says that an excellent wife is the crown of her husband.

In a more general way the woman brings honor and glory to the man. Man glories in what a woman is. And then Paul unpacks this creation order further in verses 8-9.

I mentioned earlier that the word head means both has the both nuances of source and authority. We see that in verses 8-9. First in verse 8 it says for man was not made from woman but woman from man that captures the idea of source and according to Genesis 2-7 and 22 God created man from the dust of the earth but then he created woman from the man's rib.

And so in that sense the woman was from man. And then in verse 9 it says neither was man created for woman but woman for man. The woman was created as man's helper and is oriented toward him.

And this is where the idea of the man's headship and the woman's helpship comes from. It goes all the way back to creation. And the fact that woman was created for man conveys the idea of man's leadership and authority.

[34 : 51] So just as in a thoughtfully packaged furniture when you buy it and it comes there's a rationale for the way in which it is ordered and packaged because certain things have to come out first and be organized and assembled first for the other parts to fit.

So in a similar way Paul sees a divine rationale and design in the fact that man is the head of the woman that man was created first and the woman was created from the woman that he was the source.

And this creation order is why as Paul says in verse 10 a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels. And the verse literally says a wife ought to have authority on her head.

That parallels verse 7 which says a man ought not to cover his head. That parallel structure as well as all of verses 8 to 9 which gave the reason for why a woman should cover her head during praying or prophesying shows us that this is what verse 10 means that it's referring to the sign of the man's authority over the woman his headship over the woman.

And so then this head covering by woman wearing it and by man not wearing it is intended to display the complementarian relationship between them in the context of corporate worship. And the fact that Paul appeals to God's creation is so significant because that means that this complementarian relationship between man and woman is not the result of the fall.

- [36 : 12] It's not a result of human sin and corruption. It's part of God's original design and creation. So even though a head covering might be culturally relative what the head covering represents is not culturally relative.

So Christians ought to worship in a way that displays the complementarian relationship in our own culturally appropriate way. And then at the end of verse 10 for added emphasis Paul adds a surprising reason for why men and women should observe these customs.

He says because of the angels. Because this mention is so brief and the context doesn't provide too many clues it's difficult to ascertain what it means. But earlier in chapter 4 verse 9 Paul mentioned that he and the apostles in their suffering witness to Christ they're exhibited to the world and to angels and to men.

And then similarly in 1 Timothy 6.21 Paul writes to Timothy in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging doing nothing from partiality.

So Paul I think is simply saying here that even the angels of God are watching to ensure that we honor this God given order by upholding the creational order when we are worshipping him when worshipping God.

- [37 : 28] And because of this reason Paul says Christians ought to worship in a way that displays that complementarian relationship between man and woman. But as Paul continues to hammer home this point he is aware very aware that his teaching can be easily misunderstood distorted and abused as it has been countless times throughout human history.

And so he issues a very strong qualification in verses 11 to 12. He says Nevertheless in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman for as woman was made from man so man is now born of woman and all things are from God.

So if you're a woman and you've been cringing up to this point this is your vindication. Men should not entertain themselves with vain and false notions of superiority just because man is the head of the woman and the source of the woman.

Yes it is true that the woman came from man but ever since Adam every single man was born into this world through a woman. Though man had priority in creation woman has priority in procreation.

Men and women are not independent of each other rather they are interdependent. Their differentiated roles and duties work together for good and neither can boast in their status or position because ultimately all things are from God.

- [38 : 54] The idea that women are equal to men which we take for granted in our culture the idea that men need women just as much as women need men it's not a feminist idea.

It's a Christian idea. And Paul says it here 2,000 years before any woman's rights activists. And only those who follow Christ's example of sacrifice and service can live out this ideal which is why Paul says in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman.

The phrase is important in the Lord. It's similar to what Paul says in Galatians 3, 28 that 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.

It's not the case that only Christian men are created by God to fulfill their role as heads and it's not the case that only Christian men are born of woman. Every man Christian or not is born of woman but the reason why Paul adds specifically in the Lord is because this kind of unity and diversity equality and distinction can only be achieved among those who are in the Lord.

This is objectively verifiable you can check this through history the culture that is not converted a culture that does not embody Christ's servant-like sacrifice and humility always abuses their woman.

[40 : 22] That's why in scripture it doesn't directly address how men and women opt to relate in society in general. It never speaks to that. Instead it focuses on how Christian men and women should relate in the context of marriage and in the context of the church.

Why? Because it's only possible to do it's so hard it's only possible to do when you know Christ when you embody Christ's sacrificial leadership as men when women embody Christ's humble submission unless that happens this is not possible.

So then having appeal to culture and then to creation finally in verse 13-15 Paul appeals to our consciousness to teach that Christians ought to worship in a way that displays that complementary relationship.

Read with me. He writes verse 13 and following judge for yourselves. Is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him but if a woman has long hair it is her glory for her hair is given to her for a cover.

By nature Paul does not mean here biology or natural law because biology doesn't teach us that if a man wears long hair that it's disgraceful.

[41 : 41] Rather Paul is speaking of natural knowledge our intuitive understanding of the natural way of things. He's referring to our consciousness of the way things ought to be.

Our common sense we might call it. Paul argues that we intuitively know in our consciousness that it is appropriate for women to cover their head and he uses the analogy of hair to prove it. He says having long hair brings glory and honor to the woman but it brings shame and disgrace to the woman.

So this I know some of you guys have supported some of the men have supported long hairs in the past so I'm not trying to condemn you here but thankfully none of you guys have it now.

But this is historically verifiable. So for example Kurt Sten he is a former professor of pathology and dermatology at Yale University School of Medicine and he authored a book entitled Hair, A Human History and in it he writes that it is almost universally culturally found that women have longer hair than men.

Even in cultures where it was acceptable for men to have long hair, women generally had longer hair than men. So Paul is appealing to this kind of universal kind of consciousness, awareness, common sense of what is appropriate for men and women.

[42 : 58] And the word covering here literally means wraparound. So Paul is again making a connection to why women should cover their heads during worship. That God gave naturally a hair for a covering.

So in a way, since that's the way, it's the natural way of things, since that is the natural way of things, the woman should also cover her head when she's praying or prophesying in public worship. That's Paul's argument by analogy.

Now at this point, of course, some people would object that this consciousness is subjective and that it can vary from person to person and from culture to culture. Although that study shows that it doesn't vary too much, but I suppose it's possible and it is true that it is in some degree subjective.

But that's why it's important that Paul doesn't merely appeal to our consciousness, but he also appeals to the culture and most importantly to creation. These three criteria together bear witness to the fact that Christians ought to worship in a way that displays that complementary relation between man and woman.

Consciousness, culture, creation, three things. We could also call those things gender identity, gender, and sex. Or we could call it the psychological, sociological, and theological conceptions of gender.

[44 : 11] Of the three, it is the unchanging theological reality rooted in God's creation order that is decisive. And we must strive to conform our sociological and psychological realities to that unchanging reality.

Unfortunately, nowadays, the precise opposite is happening. The backward thing is happening where people consider their own subjective psychological perception of themselves and their gender to be supreme.

And so their own gender identity is supreme. So because of that, they fight to make society accept their confused gender identity, and then they undergo even sex reassignment surgery to make their biological sex conform to their gender identity.

instead of flailing against God's creative design, we should seek to bring our psychological and sociological realities into conformity with the theological reality reflected in our biology.

This issue was contentious in Paul's day, and it remains contentious in our day. And so Paul concludes this passage with verse 16. If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

[45 : 21] Four times throughout this letter, Paul corrects the Corinthian behavior by appealing to the common practice of the universal church. And this is because the Corinthian church thought themselves superior, and they deviated from the established practices of the universal church in a number of significant ways.

And this appeal remains forceful to us today, because for two millennia of church history, every major stream of Christian denominations, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant, have taught this differentiated, complementary roles of men and women.

And we don't see a major deviation from this until the 20th century. If we choose to be contentious about this issue, then we stand against 1,900 years of church history and consistent church teaching across cultures and geographies.

As English writer G.K. Chesterton puts it, quote, fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions. Let me ask you, brothers and sisters, men and women, do you fit snugly into God's creative design?

Do you live as a man? Do you live as a woman? Or do you protest it? Do you resist it? Do you seek to erase it?

[46 : 48] God's plan for us is good. And this complementary relationship between man and woman is not something that we should accept begrudgingly, reluctantly, but it's something that we should celebrate and thank God for.

I think about it this way. I don't know if, I love music, and I don't know if you have ever listened to songs where the melody and harmony that is being sung are so beautiful that it gives you the shivers or makes you want to cry.

Have you guys ever listened to songs like that? I have, I think of, you know, Simon and Garfunkel's Sound of Silence. Or our Boston native band Extreme, although I don't like any of their other songs, More Than Words.

Or the male and female indie folk duo, the Civil Wars number entitled Poison and Wine. Listen to these. All of these songs have fantastic melodies, but these songs would not have their haunting, transcendent beauty without the sublime harmonies.

In a similar way, men and women were created to be interdependent, not interchangeable. And it is their unique manhood and womanhood, masculinity and femininity that the truly, in those things that the truly transcendent beauty of God and His creative design comes to the fore.

[48 : 22] For a woman who may struggle with this, let me conclude with a quote from Elizabeth Elliot. She was a Christian missionary who authored a book called Let Me Be a Woman. And she says this in the book.

It is a naive sort of feminism that insists that women prove their ability to do all the things that men do. This is a distortion and a travesty. Men have never sought to prove that they can do all the things women do.

Why subject women to purely masculine criteria? Women can and ought to be judged by the criteria of femininity. For it is in their femininity that they participate in the human race.

And femininity has its limitations. So has masculinity. That is what we've been talking about. To do this is not to do that.

To be this is not to be that. To be a woman is not to be a man. To be married is not to be single. To marry this man is not to marry all the others.

[49 : 24] A choice is a limitation. This is difficult to accept because of our sinfulness.

We don't like any kinds of limitations placed on us. And that's why we have to look to Christ and his example to be able to live in this way. Philippians 2, 5-7 says, Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man.

Let me address my sisters briefly, directly. I know this is hard for you because a lot of men are very immature. They don't deserve the respect and that you accord, that you're being called to accord to them.

I include myself in that. But the sacrifice that you make is like compared to the sacrifice Christ himself made when he left his divine throne to become a human being, take on the frailty of human flesh so that he could die for our sins and save us.

And men, we are called to exemplify, to follow Christ's sacrificial leadership. And women, we're called to exemplify Christ's humble submission.

[50 : 56] It's for every Christian, it's humility, pride that is the pathway to glory. And I pray that we'll be able to do that. So let's take a moment of silence to reflect on this.

Ask yourself in what ways you can fit more snugly into God's design.