

1 Corinthians 11a

Why did Paul urge the Corinthians to follow his example (v. 1)? Because he was striving to follow the example of Christ. The alternative would be to follow the example of the non-believing world around them.

What did Paul commend the Corinthians for (v. 2)? They had remained devoted to Paul and to his teachings, i.e. the central doctrines of the faith, which he had communicated to them (11:23; 15:1, 3).

What is God's order of authority which Paul reminds the Corinthians of (v. 3)? There are three great relationships involving authority and subjection. First, the head of every man is Christ; Christ is Lord and man is subject to Him. Secondly, the head of woman is man; the place of headship was given to the man, and the woman is under his authority. Thirdly, the head of Christ is God; even in the Godhead, One Person has the place of rule and Another takes the place of willing subordination,¹ i.e. subordination in role and function but not in personhood.

It should be emphasized that subjection or subordination does *not* mean inferiority. Christ is subject to God the Father but He is not inferior to Him. Neither is woman inferior to man, though she is subordinate to him.

How does Paul use the word "head" twice (v. 4)? In the first instance, he clearly meant the man's physical head. The second time, he probably meant his spiritual head, i.e. Jesus Christ. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, that is, Christ.....it is an act of gross disrespect.

What condition was required for women to pray or prophesy in the church meetings (v. 5)? Her physical head *must* be covered; otherwise she disgraced her symbolic head, i.e. her husband. It would send the same message as if she had shaved her head. She would be flaunting her independence saying, in effect, that she does not recognize her husband's headship and will not submit to it. The bottom-line principle is women are to show respect to their husbands by their godly lives not merely by what they wear.

What is the directive given to men and why (v. 7)? Since man is "*the image and glory of God*," man should not cover his head in Christian worship because to do so would be the equivalent of veiling the glory of God, and this would be an insult to God. In contrast, the woman is the glory of *man* so she should cover her head during public worship. Her *role* is one of subordination to man.

What are the origin and purpose of man and woman according to God's design (vv. 8-9)? Man was not created from woman but woman was created from man. The man was first, then the woman was taken from his side. Furthermore, God created the woman *for* the man. The Lord distinctly stated in **Genesis 2:18**, "*It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.*" The headship of man and the subjection of woman have been God's order from the very beginning and that order is just as applicable to us today.

What is required of woman because of her position of subordination to man (v. 10)? The woman ought to have a *sign of authority on her head*, i.e. the head-covering which indicates recognition of the authority of her husband. Note that the head-covering is simply an outward sign and it is of value only when it is the outward sign of an inward grace, i.e. when the heart is truly subordinate. Then, a covering on a woman's head becomes truly meaningful.²

How does Paul further describe the man-woman relationship (v. 11)? Man and woman are mutually dependent. They need one another and the idea of subordination is not in conflict with being mutually dependent.

What point(s) is Paul making about the origin of man and woman (v. 12)? He is referring to the process of birth. The woman gives birth to the man child. Thus, God has created this perfect balance to indicate that the one cannot exist without the other. They are interdependent, even as the Son and the Father are. "*Everything comes from God*" means that He has divinely appointed all these things, so there is no just cause for complaint. Knowing that these relationships were created by God should make the man humble and the woman content.³

Returning to his main argument of propriety in worship (vv. 4-6), what is Paul getting at by his rhetorical question (v. 13)? He appealed to the Corinthians' own judgment and sense of right and wrong. The expected response is that it is not reverent or honorable behavior for a woman to enter into the presence of God unveiled.

What does Paul appeal to (v. 14)? *"The very nature of things"* i.e. what is obviously right or wrong.....how their actions appear in their own culture. If a man had long hair in their culture, it was a disgrace.

What point is Paul making about woman's long hair (v. 15)? God gave woman a natural covering of glory in a way He did not give to man. Long hair was a woman's glory because it clearly identified her as a unique creation.

What was Paul's response to those who may have disagreed (v. 16)? He informed them that the other churches of God followed what he had just explained as universal church practice, i.e. the men wear short hair and the women wear long hair. The Corinthians were apparently out of step with the other churches in their conduct.

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1785). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Ibid. p. 1786

³ Ibid.