

Intro:

1. This morning, we are going to continue looking at a passage that has found itself in the center of a heated debate in some Christian circles.
 - a. The contention surrounds Paul's instructions for women to keep their head covered.
2. Some say that this is an irrelevant topic for today and try to dismiss the topic or gloss over it by saying it only applied to the women during that time period.
 - a. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this and preserve this for our instruction and edification so let's take a look at it for ourselves and see what the Holy Spirit has to say to us today.
3. Think about this question: what is the role of women? (modesty, submission and equality)

Read 1 Cor 11:1-16 and Pray¹

1. I want to work our way through this passage and I plan to explain to you the cultural standards, setting and climate.
 - a. I want you to understand what Paul was trying to communicate and perhaps how Paul's letter would be understood by the Christians in Corinth.
2. After we've worked our way through these 16 verses, I'll attempt to address this issue of head coverings and how it might apply to us as believers.

1 Corinthians 11:1 ¹Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

1. Paul was a man who visually demonstrated his faith in Christ by his actions.
 - a. He was a mentor and model for the believers in the early church to follow.
2. Just as I exhorted the men last week, I also challenge you: Ladies, who can you imitate in a God honoring way?

¹ Unless otherwise marked, all scriptures taken from the New King James Version. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

- a. You also need a mentor, a good female Christian mentor and accountability partner to pair up with.
3. I know we have a lot of young families here, perhaps you are not an older woman by years, but maybe you are older in the Lord.
 - a. If so, use what you've learned to help some of the spiritually younger sisters out.
 4. Whether you currently have a mentor or not, you can follow Paul's example, because Paul was doing all that he could in the power of the Holy Spirit to imitate Christ.
 5. I don't want you to lose sight of Paul's example so let's back up to 1 Cor 10:32-33
 - a. Paul would willingly lay down any rights and privileges he deserved in order to share the Gospel.
 - b. This man who now has something to say to the ladies has himself made great sacrifices for the sake of others, something he learned from Jesus who made the ultimate sacrifice for others.
 6. Ladies, make sure the person you are following and imitating has the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:2 ²Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

1. The believers in Corinth evidently didn't have a problem with keeping the church customs Paul had taught them during his 2nd missionary journey.
 - a. It's not what they were doing, it's the way they were going about it that Paul is about to address.

1 Corinthians 11:3 ³But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

1. This is without doubt, the most important verse of this passage.
 - a. If you cannot understand and accept this verse, then the rest of this passage will be nonsense to you.

2. Historically: The women in Paul's day were experiencing something new and refreshing, freedom in Christ.
 - a. With Christ... Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
 - b. In 1 Cor 12, Paul is going to say something similar.
 - c. With regard to salvation and acceptance in the Lord, ladies are free and equal with men.

3. But despite being equal in value, and often equal or superior in ability to men, God has ordained an order that puts the man as the leader over his wife.
 - a. Based on this passage, Christian women should most certainly submit to their Christian husbands.
 - b. And I believe that Eph 5, Col 3 and 1 Peter 3 teach that wives should submit to their husbands even if they are not a Christian...
 - i. So long as the husband is not calling you to commit a sin before the Lord, then you submit.

4. I also believe that based on this passage and several others (1 Corinthians 14, 1 Timothy 2 & 3, Titus 1), that the church is to be lead by men.
 - a. That doesn't mean that women can't have an active role in ministry either serving beside their husband or with helping in roles that don't exercise authority over men.
 - b. For these reasons, we will not ordain a woman. That's why Sonya is not Pastor Sonya but just Sonya or Ms. Sonya if you're one of the kids in SS.

1 Corinthians 11:4 **⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.**

1. First of all:
 - a. Prayer is vertical – Speaking to God on behalf of others.
 - b. Prophecy is horizontal – Speaking to others on behalf of God.

2. According to Jewish tradition: Men covered their head in honor of Moses who veiled his face.
 - a. In Exodus 33 Moses got to see the just a little bit of God's glory pass before him while he was on Mt. Sinai.
 - b. In Exodus 34 we read that because of this encounter with the Lord, Moses face shone. Moses had a shining face from being in the presence of the Lord.
 - c. Why did Moses cover his face? Many thought that Moses covered his face so people wouldn't get freaked out by 'Glow Worm'-like face. Not so.
 - d. Moses only wore the veil b/c the glory was fading.
 - e. In 2 Corinthians 3:13 it says, that Moses put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.
 - i. Moses' face was like the glow in the dark tick marks on my watch.
3. But even Moses removed the veil when he went in to see the Lord, but for some reason the Jewish tradition of men covering their heads stuck.
4. But Paul says, if a man prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.
 - a. He dishonors Christ, but how?
 - b. In that he is not recognizing that the veil has been done away in Christ, and the glory is not fading glory, but a lasting one.
 - c. The man is to keep his head and eyes up and on the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:5-6 **⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.**

1. Notice that women are allowed to pray and prophesy; their praying and prophesying is not the problem.
 - a. She was however to be covered when doing so.
2. And Paul goes on to point out a cultural stigma here.

- a. If the Corinthian Christian woman back then went about without her head covered, it's would be the same as if her head was shaved.
- b. Having your shaved head referred to one of two things back then...
 - i. Having your head shaved was a mark of **shame** for an honorable man or woman
 - ii. If you were not shamed then you would be thought of as a **prostitute** for the temple prostitutes often kept their head shaved.

1 Corinthians 11:7-9 ⁷For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man is not from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

1. We all bear the image of God, but especially man because according to God's sovereign will, He created man first.
 - a. Then God created woman in a different way.
 - b. From his side, Adam found a bride.
 - c. The woman is a reflection of the man.
2. By his side, you ladies complete and compliment your man.
3. The Rabbis would say... God did not form the women out of... lest she...
 - a. Head – proud Eye – lust
 - b. Ear – curious Mouth – talkative
 - c. Heart – jealous Hands – covet
 - d. Feet – wander
 - e. Rib – always covered, modesty should be her primary quality.
4. Put another way: Good took a rib from Adam's side and made a women for him so that she would be close to his heart, that she might be his companion, his comfort, his love.
 - a. Remember, the reason God made Eve was because Adam needed help!

Paul has just shared creation order - 1 Corinthians 11:10 ¹⁰For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

1. The head covering was a symbol of authority showing that she was modest and submitted to her husband according to God's established authority.
2. Paul includes "because of the angels"; perhaps those that read Paul's letter would understand what he meant.
 - a. But we really have no idea what Paul's talking about here so we are going to allow the scriptures to speak for themselves.
 - b. Scriptures are the best commentary on scriptures (remember that principle)
 - c. Isaiah 6:2 The Seraphim *covered* themselves while worshipping God.
 - d. Hebrews 1 we see that the angels understand *authority* and *submission*.
 - e. 1 Peter 1, the angels are *watching* us.
 - f. The way was act can be a witness to others and it is also a witness to the angels.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 ¹¹Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. ¹²For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

1. Men have been given a place of authority, but men and women are both equal in the sight of God.
2. Men and women are both needed; neither can live without the other.
 - a. "all things are from God" and all things belong to God.

1 Corinthians 11:13 ¹³Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

1. This is not an open question. Based on the cultural norms of that day, Paul's question was meant to lead them to one conclusion...
 - a. That it was not proper for a woman to pray without her head uncovered.

1 Corinthians 11:14-15 ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.

1. In most cultures, women generally have longer hair than men.
 - a. Long hair was and is often a mark of feminine beauty.
2. Biologically men's hair usually grows slower, and won't grow as long as a woman's hair.
 - a. What's more, generally, most men will experience hair loss to some degree.
 - b. Sonya cuts my hair and I like having my hair cut short and she likes it when it's longer; she encouraged me yesterday as she gave me a trim to enjoy my hair while I still have some on top.
3. As we look at Vs 14-15, we need to avoid two mistakes:
 - a. What Paul is describing here is not a sin, a dishonor, but not a sin.
 - i. Show pics, this is weird, but not sinful.
 - b. Also, Paul is not saying in these verses that a woman's hair is the covering he's talking about earlier in the chapter.
 - i. Earlier in the chapter, Paul's speaking of a literal head covering in addition to just having long hair.
4. In other words, in line with cultural norms, Paul's saying, women, your hair naturally grows long, leave it long and beautiful.
 - a. Men, don't look like a woman with long hair (Mike paraphrase).

1 Corinthians 11:16 ¹⁶But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

1. Again not open ended. The implication is that if someone is being contentious about having to wear a head covering, they were to consider the custom around them and the custom of the other Christian churches through the region.
 - a. There was no standard or example of other women praying with their heads uncovered.

- b. In other words, no Christian ladies outside of Corinth were praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered.
- 2. It seems simple enough, the Christian women of Corinth should consider how Paul himself did all that he could not to offend others.
 - a. In this case, the best thing those women could do was cover their heads and honor and submit to their husbands as unto the Lord.

What's the intent? It's two fold.

- 1. Don't stumble others by flaunting your liberties in Christ.
- 2. That women need to take active and deliberate steps to bring themselves under God's established authority and the headship of their husband.
 - a. Last week we looked at Adam's curse for not leading and protecting his wife.
 - b. Now I'd like you to consider Eve's curse for stepping outside of God's established authority.
 - c. Genesis 3:16 *To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."*
 - d. Eve's curse has passed to all women. You want to rule the roost.
 - e. How do you bring that under control?

But what about today?

- 1. If you were Muslim, then when the Imam teach from Surah 24:30-31 you would know without question or fuss that you were to wear your head covering that looks something like this (pics of Muslim women).
- 2. If you were born into a Christian Amish or Mennonite family then you'd probably...
- 3. If you were born into a Christian family in India, you'd wear your head coverings during church services.
- 4. But because we are from a modern western culture we have grown up thinking it's weird, outdated, and perhaps even chauvinistic for a woman to wear a head covering.

A Conclusion to the matter?

1. I could just follow suit and agree with the scores of *modern* bible commentators and teachers and who say that the piece of cloth on their head was cultural.
2. It's easy to stand here and say that the appropriate application is to...
 - a. Be sure to recognize your husband as the head of the home and
 - b. Consider the standard in culture and what's accepted in the churches around you and be sure you don't stumble anyone by your actions and you are good.
 - c. That would be easy and we would be done.
3. But I have to be honest; I don't think it's that simple.
 - a. What else does the New Testament say about head coverings? Nothing.
 - i. It has plenty to say about submission, but nothing else on head coverings.
 - b. We are left with this one passage and while I don't think these verses should be overemphasized, I don't think they should be disregarded either.
4. If you go looking, you can find plenty of sources that convincing argue that head coverings are for today.
 - a. One woman who practiced the head covering tradition said it's her reminder that she needs to be in submission to her husband just as God has ordained.

What do I think personally?

1. I think that there are some who feel more righteous and holy because they wear a head covering and that is not the case.
 - a. We don't earn our righteousness, it's imputed to use from Jesus Christ.
2. I think that if all the ladies here in the church started wearing head coverings to church and bible studies everyone outside the church (the world) would think we are weird.
 - a. But when did the Lord call for us to be concerned about that?

- b. Matthew 5:10-12 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

 - c. God has called for believers to pursue *righteousness* over cultural *relevance*.
3. I can say with certainty, if you go to India and perhaps a number of other places where a majority of Christian women wear head coverings, then you should put a covering on your head. That would be the right thing to do.

 4. I can say with certainty that you need to deal with the issue of God's authority in your life and in your home. Don't lose sight of the central verse in this passage...
 - a. **"the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"**

 5. But with regard to wearing a head covering in public worship...
 - a. Honestly, I think it is appropriate but not required.

 6. Now it's your turn. What do you think about this passage?
 - a. You need to pray and do as the Lord leads.

 7. But remember, we are the body of Christ and we are not to let an issue such as this which has nothing to do with salvation becoming a divisive issue within the church.
 - a. Let us be governed by the principles found in 1 Corinthians 13