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1 Corinthians 11:1 - 16



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In this text, Steve Gregg explores the complex and multi-layered themes of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. He discusses the importance of laying down personal privileges for the good of others, the challenges of interpreting cultural customs, and the principles of observing societal norms that align with the gospel. Additionally, he emphasizes the mutual respect and dependency of men and women and the need to judge oneself regarding comeliness and social acceptability rather than conforming to societal norms.

Throughout his analysis, Gregg provides insightful commentary on the biblical passage and encourages Christians to prioritize obedience to Jesus' teachings over denominational doctrines or numerical growth.

Transcript

Okay, we turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. 1 Corinthians chapter 11. There are two parts to this chapter.

One of them begins at verse 2 and goes through verse 16. The other is from verse 17 on to the end of the chapter, which is basically almost exactly a division in half of the chapter into two almost equal parts. Now, verse 1 I didn't include in either of those two portions because it really concludes the previous discussion.

In chapters 8-10, as we saw last time, Paul is discussing the need for people to consider one another in the decisions they make for their lives. The decision, for instance, whether to eat meat and sacrifice to idols or not. That occupied his entire discussion from the beginning of chapter 8 actually through verse 1 of chapter 11.

I believe that chapter 11, verse 1, caps off his whole discussion. We didn't mention that last time because we were running so short on time. But where he says, Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ, he's basically summarizing what he says in verse 33 of the previous verse.

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. You remember that in chapter 9 he spent a whole chapter demonstrating that he has opted to forego some of the privileges that belong to him as a

minister of the gospel, notably the privilege of being paid and being supported by his ministry. Also the privilege of being married or the privilege of eating or drinking whatever he might choose to eat or drink.

He says, A lot of these things I have the right to do, I just lay these rights down so that I could not hinder the gospel in a way that I might hinder it if I did claim those rights. His whole purpose of writing chapter 9 was to give his own example of his own attitude of being willing to lay down his rights for others so that those in Corinth who knew that they had the right to eat meat and sacrifice to idols would be willing to lay down that right if the exercise of that right would hinder the gospel, if it would hurt a brother or sister. He concludes his discussion in chapter 10 with verse 32 and 33, Give no offense neither to the Jews, that is don't stumble anybody, neither the Jews nor the Gentiles nor the church of God, even as I, even as the example he gave at length in chapter 9. So also in verse 1 chapter 11, Be ye followers of me even as I am of Christ.

He's saying essentially, I'm setting my example before you of one who lays down his rights for the sake of others, out of love for others, and I want you to follow my example and in essence I'm following the example of Christ. I mean, after all, he laid down his rights as God and took on himself the form of a servant out of love also. So it's not as though Paul is the one who originates this policy.

He's advocating his own example for them to follow, but really it's not really his example so much as it is Christ's example. He says, I'm only doing what Christ did and now I'm asking you to do the same thing that you see me do. Now in saying be followers of me even as I am of Christ, we can see that Paul is not ashamed to model the Christian life for younger Christians.

I've heard a lot of pastors say, don't follow me, just follow Jesus. Don't imitate me because I'm just fallible and I'm likely to lead you astray. Well, it may seem very humble to say that and no doubt blatantly honest to say, well, I'm a mere human being, don't be like me, but that's not the way it should be.

We should be able to say, follow me because I am following Christ and if you follow my example, you'll be essentially following Christ as well as I am. So that's what Paul's willing to say. He could have, in chapter 9, he could have instead of giving his own example, he could have given that example of Christ as he does in Philippians chapter 2. In Philippians 2 he says, let this mind be in you which also is in Christ Jesus, though he existed in the form of God.

He did not count his equality with God a thing to be grasped or clung to and so he laid aside his rights and became a servant and so forth. He could have done that in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, but perhaps because the Corinthians, well, they were carnal for one thing. They didn't have a lot of spiritual vision.

They couldn't see Jesus very well because he was gone and they had never seen Jesus with their mortal eyes, but they had seen Paul. Paul felt like he ought to put his own example before them. He could have put that of Jesus, but they can't see Jesus, but they had seen Paul.

He had lived among them for 18 months and they knew from having observed his life that these things he was describing were true. He hadn't taken money from them. He hadn't been married.

He had abstained from eating meat, sacrifice to idols and so forth, even though he had complete liberty. Even though he taught all things are lawful to me, he didn't do all things because not all were edifying and not all were good for the church or for the kingdom of God. Some would have hindered the gospel, so he abstained.

They had been able to see him. He was a role model for them, modeling the life of Christ for them. Since they were too carnal to see Jesus very clearly, since he was absent, Paul felt like he could just remind them how he had modeled the life of Christ for them.

But of course he stresses in chapter 11 verse 1 that that model that he presented was itself an imitation of Christ, who was the ultimate role model that Paul himself followed. Now, the new discussion begins in chapter 11 verse 2, and it's interesting, the two parts of this chapter, one of them begins with the words, Now I praise you, brethren. The second part of the chapter, which begins in verse 17, says, Now in this that I declare to you, I praise you not.

So he has two things to address in this chapter. One of them he praises them for, another he says, I can't praise you for. In other words, I want to encourage you that you're doing the right thing in one instance, but I have to say you're doing the wrong thing in another.

It's interesting that he brings up the two items in this order, rather than just blasting them. I think it's a good policy, a good strategy in dealing with people, if you want to give them some correction and you want to criticize them, that you first find something you can encourage them about. Before you criticize them and say, I can't praise you for what you're doing, it's nice to find some way that you can praise them, something they are doing right, so that you don't seem to be just taking a critical negative approach to them or having an unloving approach.

Now, to give people constructive criticism is not in itself an unloving thing to do. In fact, it can be a very loving thing to do, but most people, just because of our nature, feel threatened and so forth with criticism, and so it's nice to cushion it and point out to them that you don't have a wholly negative attitude toward them, even though you have something negative to say about their behavior. And you can demonstrate that by finding something that you do feel like you can commend, and that's how Paul began

here.

He was going to criticize, in verses 17 and following, this abuse of the communion meal, which probably was being celebrated weekly at their Sunday service. We know from chapter 16, verse 1, that the Corinthians had regular meetings on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, and so they probably had their love feast on this occasion. It was common for this to be the case in the early church, and at their love feast, they were abusing the Lord's table.

There was another problem in the church, or at least it was a potential problem, or a question that had arisen, about whether the Christians ought to observe the customs of their own culture with respect to women wearing head coverings or not, and he talks about that principally in verses 2 through 16. He begins in verse 2 by saying, Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you. But I would have you to 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.

Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one, or all the same, as if she were shaved. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn or shaved.

For if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the man.

For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, better authority on her head, though some translations say a symbol of authority or a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman. But all things are from God.

Judge in yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it's a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Now, this whole passage has raised a tremendous amount of questions in the minds of most Christian readers, and I don't think it needs to be new Christians that are subject to confusion over these points, because it's a difficult passage, even for those who are somewhat, have spent a lot of time studying the Bible and even this passage. The problem, of course, arises with the question, is Paul giving universal instructions for

all Christians at all times here, or is he giving something that's cultural? And if it's something that's cultural, that applied to their church and their culture, but not to other cultures, then why is it in our Bible, and what continuing validity does it have to us? Now, I said the other day that a lot of the things, or at least some of the things in the Bible, are culturally conditioned.

At least, in my opinion, they are, and I think in the opinion of almost all Christians, that's the case. For example, we gave the example of, greet one another with a holy kiss. Well, is that something we need to take to the letter, as a command from God for all people of all time, or does the fact that in the first century, that was the common way that people greeted each other, with friendliness and affection, mean that we should translate that or interpret that in light of the current customs that carry the same significance? In our society, a hug, even nowadays, or a handshake, 20 years ago, would be about the most intimate form of greeting people would give in public.

And that, you know, the holy kiss, or a kiss on the cheek, is not considered to be unusual in the Near East, or the Middle East. That's a very common way of greeting. So, most Christians in the West have believed, and I don't find any fault with it at all, that the spirit of what Paul is saying can be extracted from statements like, greet one another with a holy kiss, without necessarily compelling us to go by the letter of it.

That is to say, if Christians today do not greet each other literally with a kiss, but nonetheless observe the spirit of what he's saying, that is, give everyone an affectionate greeting to each other, and we might have a different cultural manifestation of that, I think we just have to admit that that sometimes is an appropriate way to take the scriptures. And the question of which things to take that way, and which things we can't take that way, is one of the harder questions of biblical interpretation. Because we can see throughout the Bible that it's written to people who lived in a certain culture, at a certain time frame, and some things have changed, and probably some of the applications of things that are taught in the scriptures have changed also, or ought to be changed, to maintain the same spirit of what was being taught, and apply it to a different cultural setting.

Now, the question of the head coverings is one of the things that we have to decide. Is this something that's cultural, that applied to their locality and their time in history, or is it something universal for all times and all places? This is one of the few places where we have a pretty clear statement from Paul making the decision for us on this matter. Because in verse 16 he says, if any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Now this one verse has been taken more than one way. Some people understand it this way, if anyone seems to be contentious, we and the churches of God in general have no such custom. What custom? Of being contentious.

That is, some people are being contentious, but they should be told that being contentious is not customary. Christians should not be contentious. The churches of God, we condemn contentiousness all around.

Or else, similarly, that he might be saying, if anyone is contending against apostolic instruction that Paul is here giving, that the other churches do not have a custom of challenging apostolic teaching. You know, the question of being contentious or challenging what Paul is saying is what some people understand to be the custom that he says we don't have in other churches. That in other churches people don't challenge the teaching of an apostle.

In other churches people don't get contentious. Therefore, if anyone wants to be contentious, tell them that he's out of character and doing the wrong thing. Other churches don't do that.

It seems much more natural to the passage, though, to suggest that the things he's been discussing are the customs which he did not necessarily observe, nor the churches of God generally in the Mediterranean world. The Greeks had certain customs that are reflected in this chapter. And, of course, Corinth is a Greek city.

The exact opposite customs were observed by both Jews and Romans. In Greek society, it was part of a woman's piety that she cover her head, but a man would not. And a woman would wear her hair long, but a man would not.

In Israel, the custom was opposite. Men wore, as devout Jews still do in Israel, prayer shawls. And when they prayed, they put the shawl over their head.

The men covered their heads when they prayed in Jewish society. The women did not. Furthermore, long hair on a man in Jewish society was no shame at all.

It was a mark of the consecration to God. If a man separated himself unto God for a Nazarite vow, he would neither cut his hair nor his beard. Some of the more famous men in the Bible, like Samson, Samuel, Elijah, and John the Baptist, all had the Nazarite vow for life and apparently never cut their hair until Samson, of course, had his hair cut for him.

But Samuel, Elijah, and John the Baptist may all have been Nazarites for life. We know that Samuel was, and John the Baptist was. Elijah, it's not quite so clear.

When Hannah prayed in chapter 2, she actually mentioned that she never touched strong drink, which I believe is intended to be understood as a reference to the Nazarite vow. There was no call for a Jew to avoid strong drink unless he was under a Nazarite vow. Let me see.

I'm looking for her prayer here. It's in chapter 1, I'm sorry. Oh, it's verse 11.

It says, at the end of that verse, I will give him unto the Lord for all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. So that's a Nazarite vow. It was John the Baptist of whom it was said he'd never touched wine or strong drink, which indicates he had the Nazarite vow.

Samuel had it, Samson had it, John the Baptist had it, and Elijah may have had it. According to 2 Kings, Elijah was described as a hairy man. That might be a reference to the fact that he was a Nazarite.

Especially since John the Baptist is said to have come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and John, we are explicitly told, was a Nazarite. The description of Elijah as a hairy man is in 2 Kings 1.8, where the man who met up with Elijah said he was a hairy man, and dirt with a girdle of leather around his loins. And the king said, oh, it was Elijah the Tishbite.

Anyway, the point is, the custom among the Jews was the opposite of the custom among the Greeks. Among the Greeks, it was a shame for a man to have long hair. Among the Jews, it was actually a mark of piety for a person to grow his hair out as a mark of his separation under the Lord.

Among the Greeks, a man would not cover his head when praying. But among the Jews, it was customary for the man to cover his head, not for the woman to do so when praying. Among the Romans, I am given to understand from what I've read, the Romans had the same custom the Jews did.

That is, the women did not cover their heads to pray, but the men did. So it would seem that what Paul is saying here is the customs that he is advocating in chapter 11 about head covering to the Corinthians apply to them and their cultural setting, but are not necessarily those that would be universally applied to churches at large in the Roman world or in the Jewish community, because the Romans and the Jews have different customs. And that could be, well, what he means when he says, we have no such custom.

So that what he seems to be saying is, we have here some instruction which Paul himself refers to as customary or related to their cultural setting. And therefore the whole spirit of what he's saying would be, you should observe the customs of your society insofar as there are certain things regarded as proper for godly people to do in a society. You should not do things that would be regarded as improper unless there's some necessary reason for doing it.

It's actually along the same lines of his argument about meat sacrificed to idols. There's nothing really wrong with eating meat sacrificed to idols, but it would be considered improper to some. And to do things that are regarded as improper, which are unnecessary for you to do, would bring an unnecessary reproach upon the gospel.

And I think that that is reflected also in the book of Titus, I believe it's in Titus, chapter three, no, chapter two, verses four and five. It says that they, that means the older women, may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. In other words, he's concerned that women in Crete, where Titus was giving instructions for church, the women in Crete should behave in such a way that would adorn the gospel of Christ, that would not bring a reproach or blasphemy against Christ.

The same is said about servants. In the same chapter, Titus two, verses nine and 10, it exhorts servants to be obedient to their own masters, to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our savior in all things. So that, in other words, they make the gospel attractive by their behavior.

And when people behave in an unseemly way, and name the name of Christ, they simply bring a reproach on Christianity. And though Paul did not necessarily, I think, advocate that women must wear coverings everywhere and at all times, yet in Corinth, since that was regarded generally in the society and in the culture to be the mark of submission and the mark of a woman accepting her role in society and in religion and in the family, that they should not cast that off. They should not cast off the customs, even though they should not necessarily consider themselves under bondage to it.

He says, if anyone really is contentious, we don't have any such customs. Seems to be saying, well, you know, if someone really finds this obnoxious habit, then I guess I wouldn't push this too far. It's just a matter of custom.

But he's advocating that people should not rock the boat too much culturally, unless it was necessary. There was no moral issue involved here necessarily, except the issue of a woman accepting her role, wearing a veil or a covering was in some ways a mark of a woman's submittedness to her husband or her willingness to accept her role as a wife. And if she didn't wear a veil, she dishonored her head, it says, which indicates that her husband, who was her head, was dishonored by her when she wouldn't wear a veil.

But a man, if he did wear a veil, dishonored his head, which is Christ. Now that again, I think we have to understand all of this within the cultural context of Corinth, not necessarily that these things apply all the way across at all times. But the principles that are universal seem to be, if you live in a culture that has certain expectations of people that are not contrary to what the gospel requires us to do, we should not violate those customs.

I mean, a missionary who is a Jewish missionary like Paul, who would be accustomed to Jewish customs, and yet went to Greece, as a missionary, he adopted the customs of the Grecians. And so he probably didn't cover his head when he prayed, when he was among

the Grecians. And among those who were under the law, he became like one under the law, but when he was with those who were without law, he was like them.

The idea is that missionaries or Christians, wherever they live, should be sensitive to the cultural biases and sensitivities of the people that they're seeking to reach. And that's what I think is given an extended application in these verses. There's one principle that Paul is advocating, but to this particular church at this particular time, this is how it needed to be applied.

There were apparently Christian women in Corinth, who perhaps because they understood Christian liberty well enough, and knew that there's no distinction between man and woman in Christ, so says Paul himself in Galatians 3, that there's no more male or female in Christ, that understanding may have caused them to mistakenly feel that they should throw off everything that made a difference between them and men, and that they should throw off the custom of wearing veils and so forth. And Paul says, no, don't do that. Don't do that.

There's no reason why you should throw that off. It's going to bring dishonor to your head, to your husband, that is. People will think of your husband as not being the head of your house if you don't wear your veil, as you should, and so forth.

Again, we can study this passage verse by verse, and we shall, but we have to keep in mind that not everything it's saying is something that we should apply directly to our own society and the church at this time. But there are some principles that need to be. He says, now I praise you, brethren, verse 2, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I deliver them unto you.

That is, whatever he told them to do, they seemed to be doing. The reason that he had to write this letter is because there were certain things he had not addressed or had not addressed clearly enough, so he had to clarify. But what he had told them that they did understand, they were obeying, and that was encouraging to him.

But there were some things they still didn't apparently understand. So I would have you to know, I want to make this clear, that there is a hierarchy in the kingdom of God. The head of every man is Christ.

The head of the woman is the man. And by the way, the word woman and man in Greek can be translated wife and husband. The Greek word for man is the same as the word for husband, and the Greek word for woman is the same as the word for wife.

So it might be more proper to say the head of the husband is Christ, the head of the wife is the husband, rather than suggesting that every man is the head over every woman. It's speaking almost certainly more specifically of the marriage order, the order in the family. And the head of Christ is God.

So even though he doesn't mention them in a logical sequence, he suggests there's a hierarchy. God at the top, Christ has made himself subject to God, the Father. Every Christian man is to be answerable to Christ, and every Christian wife is to be answerable to her husband.

And that is the hierarchy that has to be understood. Now there's a number of modern problems in Christian thinking, in our modern church, that could be corrected by simply not being ignorant of this particular fact. One of those is the shepherding doctrine could be corrected by this.

Because it says the head of every Christian man is Christ, not the shepherd, or not the pastor, or not the elder of the church. We do not have men as heads over us. We have men as helpers, and as Jesus made it clear, those who are chief or leaders in the church must be those who stand under the rest, who uphold them, who are the servants of all.

Those who support the weak and encourage the downtrodden and so forth. There is a role of leadership, and it's even called ruling in the New Testament, that is proper. But that doesn't give those who are in leadership a position of headship over the individual.

Every man answers to Christ for his actions, and therefore you cannot replace Christ as head with some man, whether it be a pastor, or a teacher, or elder, or whatever. Right? Or even an apostle. Pardon? Whom shall the leaders lead? The church.

They shall lead the church. Oh no, they should lead the men, but they're not the head over the men. You see, there's a sense, well, okay, here's the difference.

In my body, there are many members. They are all supposed to respond to my head. They're all obligated to obey my head.

Now, ordinarily, messages are carried to the members of my body from my head through my nervous system. So, members of my body are led by, or messages from the head are brought to the other members of my body by the nervous system. Now, I don't know of any physical situation where this could happen, but if it were possible for the nervous system to be non-functional, so that it was no longer bringing messages correctly from the head to the rest of the body, and if there was some way the rest of the body could get messages directly from the head, they're not obligated to obey the nervous system just because it's the principal means, or the normal means by which the head communicates.

They're answerable to the head himself, not to the nervous system. And Jesus has set some apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, leaders in the church to communicate to the church the will of Christ, the will of the head. But there are times when people who hold those offices are not accurately presenting the will of Christ.

They're not true to the scripture, they're not true to Christ's teaching, in which case a man should not follow their example. Now, Jesus himself said in Matthew 23, he said, the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, which means that they sat in the seat on the stage of the synagogue, which was called Moses' seat because the law was expounded by the rabbis from this chair. It's called Moses' seat.

He said, the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, therefore all that they bid you to do, observe, or do whatever they say because they're speaking the words of Christ. But he says don't follow their example because they say and they do not. The work of the church is to teach all nations to observe all things that Jesus commanded, because Jesus is the head, you see.

And so I have not found very many churches, and I'm not saying they don't exist, I simply am saying in my experience I've found very few churches that are teaching people to do everything that Jesus commanded. That's what Jesus said the church should do. And they might be teaching them the doctrines of their denomination, they might be teaching them how to behave themselves in society or whatever, but to actually train people to do what Jesus commanded, I don't really find a lot of churches doing that.

And I'm not sure that we do it effectively, we're trying to, but the point is that that's what I understand to be the normal function of a church, is to train people to obey Jesus. And I don't necessarily think that that's very commonly found to be done. And churches can grow in numbers, but that doesn't mean they're functioning as a church, because growing in numbers is not what the church exists for.

The shepherding movement, yeah, the shepherding movement of course gives powers to the leaders that are not really there in general. But that doesn't mean that there's no form of shepherding that's legitimate. Obviously Peter said to the elders of the church, shepherd the flock, and so did Paul say that to the elders of the church of Ephesus in Acts chapter 1, he told them to shepherd the flock.

So leaders of the church should be shepherds, but when we talk about the shepherding movement, we're talking about something which has been unfortunately characterized by giving the leaders an unlimited authority over people's lives, which is not biblical. Now, what I'm saying here is that even though Christian leaders are supposed to lead, the way they lead is by example. Peter said to the elders, be examples to the flock, not lording it over God's heritage.

Well, there's the difference between what I consider to be biblical leadership and the shepherding movement. Now, I shouldn't just say everyone in the shepherding movement is abusive. I'm sure there's some good leaders who are probably not abusive in that movement.

You can't just take any, you can't take any movement and say everyone in it's bad. But

I'm saying that those things which characterize a movement are those things which it teaches and which are seen to be most rampant within it. And that is a movement I think could stand some correction on the basis of what Paul says, I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ.

If the head of every man is Christ, then man takes orders from Christ. And it's like he says in verse 1, be followers of me, even as I am of Christ. Okay, well, if you're following Christ, I'll follow you.

If you stop following Christ, I'm going to stop following you. That's what Paul's advocating. First Peter chapter 5, probably about verse 2 or so, verse 3, neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples of the flock.

First Peter 5, 3. Instructions to elders are found in that chapter in the first four verses. Feed the flock, shepherd the flock is what they're told to do. I said there's more than one thing in our modern church that could stand to be straightened out by this fact about this hierarchical structure of the church that Paul portrays.

Another thing is the common view of men and women's roles in our Western society. The view that the head of the wife is her husband is certainly something that a lot of people do not take as universally true. And if there's anything in this discussion that Paul indicates is a universally true thing, it's this hierarchy.

Certainly he would never suggest that in a different culture the head of every man is not Christ, or that in a different culture the head of Christ is not God. What he's given us here is the universal truth upon which his particular instructions are about to proceed. What he's teaching them is that there are some universal things that God has established as the proper order in the kingdom of God.

Now in Corinth, for those principles to be manifest and observed, it would be necessary for the women to wear head coverings and so forth, because that's how she would show her submission. That's how she would acknowledge the headship of her husband. In our society, a woman might not have to wear a head covering to show her headship of her husband, but that would not necessarily mean that she doesn't have to show that her husband is head.

I mean, there may be other ways of doing so. In our society, for example, women will sometimes marry and refuse to take their husband's name. They'll still keep their maiden name, which just shows, to my mind, a total unawareness of the whole purpose of marriage.

When we become married to Christ, we take on his identity, and we give up our old life, and we take on a new life under his identity, as united with him, and we take his name upon us. That's what marriage is to be a picture of. When a woman says, I'll take this

man to be my husband, but I won't take his identity, well then she simply doesn't understand what marriage is for.

She becomes one flesh with him, and his name becomes her name. It's interesting, in Genesis chapter 5, which I probably pointed out years ago when we went through Genesis, it seems like a long time ago since we went through Genesis, doesn't it? But in Genesis chapter 5, it says, in verse 2, male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. It mentions that God made male and female, and called their name Adam.

That is, the male and the female share the same name, because they become one flesh, and the man gives his name to his wife. But in our society, of course, there's a general revolt against that. Most of that revolt is outside the church, not among Christians.

But I think anyone who's been around very long knows that there are expressions of that same revolt within the church today. The point I'm making here is that there is a general tendency in our culture for women to deny that there's a distinctive role for women, and that that role that God has assigned is as helpmate to their husbands. Now, of course, a single woman's in a different position.

The Apostle Paul assumed that most women would be married, and he even said, I will that the younger women marry and bear children, and so forth, in 1 Corinthians 5. But he did acknowledge in 1 Corinthians 7 that some women would find it more advantageous for serving the Lord to be single. So he knew some women would be single, but I believe that in general, the women who were single were to regard the church, or the leadership of the church, as sort of filling the role of a husband if they had no father to do so. A woman was generally regarded to be under the headship of her father until she married.

If, however, she became older and her father was dead and she never married, then that's what I think Paul was addressing in 1 Timothy 5 about widows being added, or, well, he talked about widows there, but probably unmarried women in general would come under the wing of the church for their protection. Really interchangeability of roles, and that's not exactly the same thing. That's where I think our culture has made a wrong deduction.

Upon the premise that there is no more male or female in Christ, and that the two are equal before God, and that the woman's role is equally important with the man's role, that is a premise that I think we can establish from Scripture. There is an equality of roles, but that doesn't mean interchangeability of roles. In a marriage, there is equality, but not interchangeability.

The man cannot do the woman's work in every respect. He can't bear the children, for example. There are not interchangeable roles, but they may be regarded as equal.

And equal doesn't necessarily mean interchangeable. My lungs are of equal value to me as my heart, because if either malfunctioned, that is, if both lungs malfunctioned, I'd be in just as bad shape as if my heart did. Both my lungs taken as two, and my heart, are equal in value to me, but they're not interchangeable.

If I needed a heart transplant and all I could come up with was a lung to put in there, it wouldn't work. They're different parts of the body, but they're equal. And so also the Bible indicates that there is an equality, but there are different roles.

And it's even illustrated here where it says, the head of Christ is God. Well, we certainly believe that Christ is equal to God, but he still stands under the headship of his Father. He has deliberately taken on himself the form of a servant.

In the kingdom of God, that is of course the norm. It's supposed to be the norm that a person takes on himself the form of a servant, stands under the proper authority, and serves God in the role that he's assigned. Now, that being the underlying principle behind all that Paul now instructs them in, he goes on to make the application to their own situation.

Apparently, we can deduce from this, now whether he read it in a letter, whether it was reported to him by Stephanus or what, we don't know, but he became aware that there was some unclarity in their minds as to whether a woman ought to wear a covering in the church. That seems to be the main issue that he's asking. He answers the question in two ways.

One is by directly stating the matter that a woman ought to, in Corinth anyway. And in the other way, by showing the contrast with what men should do. And assuming that everyone understands there is a contrast between what men and women do, he shows sometimes what man is supposed to do or what is regarded as man's role with respect to this custom.

And then he shows also what woman's role is regarded to be. Every man praying a process sign, verse 4, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays a process with her head uncovered, dishonors her head.

Now, how do they dishonor their head? Dishonor does not necessarily always mean sin. Shame and dishonor are concepts which we, are things that are considered undesirable, but they're not necessarily moral issues. Many people have suffered shame for the name of Christ.

Like it says in Acts chapter 4, when the apostles were beaten, it says, they went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. There was certainly nothing morally wrong with suffering shame in that case. But shame is usually considered undesirable.

It's considered to be usually regarded as wrong. You'd only be ashamed if you did something what the majority of people thought was not good. Shame and dishonor have to do with social expectations, and the relationship of your actions to those expectations.

You do something that your society condemns, then it's something that brings embarrassment or shame upon you. If you do what your society applauds, then you wouldn't feel any shame about it. Unless you were, of course, sinning.

In this case, he's talking about the way their society will respond, or would react, to seeing a woman without a covering on her head, or seeing a man who had one on his head. They would consider this was a casting off of the normally acknowledged roles of each of these individuals. And by a man wearing a covering on his head, it would be almost like making a statement that he was under his wife's authority.

That would dishonor Christ's head, because he's not under his wife's authority, he's under Christ's authority. For a woman to not wear a covering was the way of making a statement that she's not under her husband's authority, therefore, she's dishonoring her husband by not doing so. That, I believe, is what Paul's suggesting here.

Then he says it's all the same as if she were shaven or shorn. As if she doesn't wear a covering, she might as well shave her head. Now, why does he mention this? Once again, I'm dependent upon commentators, because I wasn't there to know whether this were true, but it is generally said among Christian commentators on this passage that in Corinth, of course, being a port city where a lot of ships came and went, there was a large market for prostitution.

And the prostitutes shaved their heads so that they'd be readily identifiable at a glance by these sailors coming off the ship. And so that a woman with her head shaved was a disreputable person, although the Corinthians really had not a real high regard for sexual morality in general, that she was basically a woman who was unattached. She was not submitted to any man.

And Paul is essentially saying that if a woman doesn't wear a veil, she's making the same kind of statement as if she were shaved. That she might as well just say, I'm not married. I'm not submitted to any man.

I'm not submitted to my husband. And he says that's obviously wrong for a Christian wife to do. In verse 6, it says, for if a woman be not covered, let her also be shorn.

He's making that statement more or less ironically. He's not really suggesting that a woman ought to shave her head. He's just saying, what's the difference? If she throws off one custom, the custom of a woman wearing a veil, she might as well go all the way in the same direction and throw off the custom of a woman having hair.

Because both omissions would be making the same kind of social statement which a

Christian woman ought not to make. It says, for if the woman be not covered, let her be shorn. But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

Now notice again, he's talking about shame. He's not talking about a sin. Socially, it would be regarded as shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to go uncovered.

It would be dishonoring to her husband. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, for as much as he is the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. Now what this seems to mean is that since God was made in God's image and glory, I mean, man was made in God's image and glory, he is answerable to God alone.

As he said earlier, the head of every man is Christ. He answers directly to the Godhead, because he's made in the image of God. The woman, however, now this does not deny that the woman also bears the image of God.

She does, but that's not the point he wants to emphasize here. The woman was actually made to be corresponding to the man. Man was made, first of all, because God said, let's make something like us.

Woman was made because God said, let's make something like the man. It's not good for the man to be alone. Let's make something corresponding to him.

Therefore, her creation, even though she does, of course, bear the glory of God, also in the image of God, because she shares humanity with the male gender, the point he's making is that she does so in a derivative sense, as it were, because she is made in the image of man, and she is the glory of the man, in the same sense that man is the glory of God. Now why does he use the word glory here? I believe that there are a number of times in the Bible where the Apostle Paul in particular, and perhaps other authors, use the word glory and image almost interchangeably. Almost perhaps because it's a glory to a father, for example, when someone says, oh, your boy looks just like you.

He's a spitting image of his father. You know, most fathers are kind of, they want that. I don't know what it is about us that makes us want that.

I mean, especially if you're not too proud of your own looks, you know, you might not really want your child to bear that. But there's just something that makes you feel like, yeah, that's my son. He bears my resemblance.

It's the glory of a father that his son is like him, or bears his image. At least I think that is generally the case. And that may be the thought that is in view here, because you remember a more well-known verse in 2 Corinthians 3.18, where it says, but we all, with open faith, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory into that same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The word image is used, apparently, interchangeably with the word glory. We are

beholding the glory of the Lord changed into that same image. That's 2 Corinthians 3.18. Another place where glory and image are used either interchangeably, or at least very closely related, is Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3, which is a description of Jesus' relation to the Father.

Hebrews 1.3, it says, concerning Christ, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Jesus is the express image of God's person and the brightness of his glory. There's a number of places where image and glory are used, at least in close connection, if not interchangeably.

So also here, it says the man is the image and glory of God. He bears a resemblance to God. Because God made him in his image.

What that resemblance is, we don't fully understand. Whether it's a visually discernible resemblance, or whether it's a moral resemblance, is not entirely clear, or a spiritual resemblance. But at any rate, the woman we know from Genesis was made to be like the man, to correspond to the man, to be a help, meet, or suitable, or corresponding to him.

So he's essentially saying, a man answers directly to God, a married woman, however, answers to her husband. He said, the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is her husband. So he's saying that if a man were to covering, he's dishonoring God.

The cultural statement that makes in Corinth, is that he is not directly covered by God. He's covered by his wife, as it were. He's in submission.

He's the submitted member in his marriage. But really, he should be answering to God alone. Whereas, the woman, it's proper for her to answer to her husband, as she's the glory of the man, or of her husband.

And therefore, for her to wear a covering, it is making the proper statement. Because she is to be the submitted party in their marriage. Now, because we don't have this custom among us, it might seem extremely foreign, and strange to understand these concepts.

But these are the concepts that were embodied in the covering, or the veiling of women in that society. And he says, for the man is not of the woman, verse 8, but the woman is of the man. Now, what he means by that is God made the man first, and then the woman was made out of him, from his rib.

But he does soften that statement a little later. Down in verse 12, he says, for as the woman is of the man, which he had said in verse 8 to be the case, he says, even so is the man also by the woman. That is to say, even the woman was taken out of man, every man that's ever lived since Adam has been taken out of a woman, too.

I mean, man owes his existence to woman now, ever since Adam and Eve, as much as woman owes her existence to the man. So he's basically trying to say, there is an equality. There is a mutual dependency.

There is no sense in which the man is superior or independent from the woman. There is a mutual dependency, and there should be a mutual respect and high regard for one another. But culturally, the customs of covering or non-covering are not the same for men and women, and therefore he's advocating that they follow the customs essentially as they were intact in Corinth.

In verse 9, it says, neither is the man created for the woman, but the woman is created for the man. Now, this is something we just need to keep in mind. It goes very much against the grain of our modern thinking, but it's biblical, and if it's biblical, pardon? You don't mind it, but some women do, and some men do, too.

Some men don't agree with this, and some of them are even in the church. But Paul makes two statements. He says, just as the woman is of the man, that is, she was created out of the man, so also the purpose for her being created was to be for the man.

I will make a helpmate for him, God said when he made the woman, and therefore she was made for man. Now, the state of a single woman who just remained single just to do so, just because she prefers a career to married life, I don't think it's a very good condition for her. Now, a woman who stays single so she can devote herself entirely to the service of Christ, that's another story.

She, in a sense, has a man that she's made for, and that's Christ. And I've always admired a woman who didn't marry. I knew one in particular.

She said she wasn't going to marry because she felt she was married to Christ, and she just wanted to give her full affection to him. That's exactly what Paul advocates as a good thing for women to do in 1 Corinthians 7. But in such a case, that woman is not without a man. She has a man, Christ, as her husband, as her head.

But in general, Paul assumed most women would be married, and that an unmarried woman who wasn't just totally consecrated to Christ was not necessarily in a natural condition. She wasn't made for that condition. She was made for man.

She was made out of man, and she was made for man. And that should be acknowledged. And so he says in verse 10, for this cause ought a woman to have authority on her head because of the angels.

Now, this is perhaps the most difficult verse in the passage, because we, first of all, don't know which angels he means, fallen or holy. Secondly, once that's determined, we're not sure what he means for fear of the angels. What is the exact danger he has in mind here? And thirdly, and maybe this should have been listed first, we don't know what he

means she should have authority on her head.

Most new translations have tried to simplify this by saying she should have a symbol of authority on her head, by which they mean a veil. If she wears a veil, they regard this as a symbol of authority. But it doesn't say that in the Greek.

It just says she should have authority on her head. And that has led to a lot of confusion, and I'm not sure I can remove that confusion because it's just got some problems with the verse. It's not entirely clear what Paul's referring to.

In the context, it would seem like he's advocating that a woman should have a covering of some kind on her head, because that's what he's been saying all along here. And that would seem agreeable with the context of the statement, although the wording of the statement doesn't necessarily call for that. It doesn't say that she should have a symbol of authority on her head, just that she should have authority on her head.

What that means is not, as I said, entirely clear. It might mean that she should have a head, that is a husband or Christ, to be a head over her and authority upon her. But again, we can't be sure that it means that just from the way it's worded.

It's an awkward statement. And I've read some rather learned expositions about this one verse, trying to get clarity on it, and all acknowledge that there's really no way to clarify it without changing it. Adding a word here or there that's not in the Greek, in which case you can clarify it and make it mean something.

But whether it really was supposed to mean that or not is open to question. If it was, then why are those words missing in the Greek? So, in the absence of any better view, it seems from the context that we should understand the statement that a woman ought to have a covering on her head. Whether he means this as a symbol of authority, that is a symbol of her husband's authority, or whether it means something else, I'm not entirely clear and I'm not sure anyone is.

But since the discussion is all about coverings, we'll assume for this discussion that he means that she should wear a covering on her head. Now, for fear of the angels is another problem. Or because of the angels, I'm sorry.

Some understand this to mean because the holy angels would be shocked to see a woman's head uncovered. That is, they'd be shocked that a woman would be so brazen as to just cast off her role as a woman and seek to be a non-sexual identity or to be the same interchangeable with a man. And that would be astounding and shocking to the angels.

We don't want to give them any heart attacks. So, because of them, let's not do it. Others have understood it to refer to the assumption that the sons of God who married the daughters of men in Genesis chapter 6, that those sons of God were angels, as many

believe that to be the case.

And that Paul is suggesting, you know, angels, they sometimes go after women. I mean, they're attracted to women. Women are unveiled themselves so the angels don't get, you know, too allured.

And some understand this to be a reference to that. I think the most likely, and this is just my opinion as opposed to those of other people who have other opinions, but I think the most likely interpretation is that it's talking about fallen angels. Now, couldn't prove it, but it may be a reference to the fact that demonic powers make a prey of people who are lone rangers, people who are not covered, as it were, not properly standing in their place in God's kingdom, in their hierarchical assigned place.

There's one thing that comes to my mind as a possible cross-reference to this, although I wish I could remember where it is. Here it is, Proverbs 17, 11. Proverbs 17, 11 says, An evil man seeks only rebellion.

Now, rebellion is the opposite of submission. An evil man seeks only rebellion. Therefore, a cruel messenger, the word messenger could be translated angel.

The word angel means messenger. Therefore, we could read it, Therefore, a cruel angel shall be sent against him. Against who? The rebellious one.

A wicked man, an evil man seeks only rebellion. Therefore, a cruel messenger or a cruel angel will be sent against him. That may imply that when a person adopts an attitude of rebellion, that they thereby make themselves vulnerable to demonic attacks, fallen angels, cruel angels, that would be sent against them.

Why would that be so? Because the devil is the instigator of rebellion. It says in 1 Samuel 15, rebellion is what? Like the sin of witchcraft. We would not be surprised if a person was involved in witchcraft and they became demon possessed as a result of that.

And since rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft, we should not be surprised if a rebellious person also comes under demonic attacks, and perhaps even demonic possession. And it may be that that is what Paul has in mind here. I couldn't, again, be dogmatic or prove it.

So when he says this woman ought to wear a covering because of the angels, it may mean because of these fallen angels, because of these demonic powers that come against those who are rebellious and who are not standing under the proper authorities. Oh, that was Proverbs, what, 1711? Oh, oh, rebellion is the sin of witchcraft. That's 1 Samuel chapter 15, what, 23 or something like that? Is it verse 23? Okay.

Okay, well, I've had to consider all of them, and some of them don't sound very sensible to me, but that one does seem to make some sense, at least to me. Okay, verse 11. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the

man in the Lord.

So he's basically saying, however, there's no reason for man to get uppity about the things he's pointed out. That is, he's pointed out that the woman was made for the man, the woman was made out of the man, the woman's head is the man. I mean, all these things have these truths, and they are truths that Paul is just extracting from the Old Testament.

He says, historically, these truths have been abused by men. Men have thought, well, since that's the case, well, let's trample upon the woman's, you know, dignity, and just make her chattel, make her like a possession. Let's multiply wives, and not regard the feelings of women and so forth, and not give them any authority of any kind, and not give them any credibility, and not educate them.

The Jews wouldn't even teach the women the law. They said women aren't capable of understanding the law. So they wouldn't even teach the law to the women.

Now, that wasn't biblical. That was just the tradition of the Jews. And so, men have abused this truth about the role of men and women.

And we can't change the fact that that happens. Just like we can't change the fact that slavery is an institution that has been abused very many times in history. But that doesn't change the fact that slavery is neither forbidden in the Bible, but it is also not even necessarily regarded as an unpleasant thing.

In some cases, slavery was regarded as a lesser of two evils, or as, you know, a desirable state for some people. That is, some slaves might want to remain in slavery when offered their freedom. So, the fact that slavery has sometimes historically been abused doesn't mean the institution needs to be condemned wholesale.

And the fact that, well, marriages have been abused too, but we don't want to cast out marriage either. And the fact that men have abused their authority over women, or that rulers have abused their authority over nations, that doesn't mean we cast out the whole concept of rulers, or that we throw out the whole idea of men having authority. But Paul does try to put a bounce on it and make it clear, well, you men, you know, by the way, even though I have said that woman is made from a man, realize, of course, every man has a mother.

And therefore, every man owes his existence to a woman as well. And in a sense, men and women are on equal footing with regard to mutual dependency between the genders. And that's what he's trying to say.

He's trying to avoid the woman's dignity being thrown out in this discussion. You know, as though it's not there. He wants to make it clear that he does regard the women as important and valuable and all that, even though his general discussion is about how the

women ought to be in their place, under their husbands.

Okay, verse 12. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman. But all things are of God.

Judge in yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Now, notice this. He doesn't say, I am decreeing from the Lord that it is wrong. He says, judge in yourselves, is it comely? What's comely mean? Essentially, is it socially acceptable? He's not relating this as though it's a moral question.

And he even gives them the right to make their own decision on it. Judge in yourselves. He doesn't necessarily say, I'm going to give you a papal bull about this, or I'm going to give an apostolic decree.

He just says, I'll let you make up your own mind. Does it seem comely? If it seems comely, then go for it. If it doesn't seem comely, then don't do it.

The point is, it's not a moral question about whether women were veiled or not. It's just a matter of, is it discreet? Is it wise? Is it comely? Is it something society accepts as normative? And if not, then of course, then he's suggesting that Christians ought not rock the boat in society on this matter. Then he says, does not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair, it's a shame to him? But if a woman have long hair, it's a glory to her, for her hair is given to her for a covering.

Now, this statement about long hair on men has been given a lot of mileage in the last 20 years. Unfortunately, it hasn't been used with a very great degree of importance. It's a matter of exegetical consistency, because the funny thing is that you don't hear much about it anymore, because men don't wear their hair long very much anymore.

Or if they do, it's no longer considered to be an issue. But back in the early 70s, it was certainly an issue when the Jesus movement was going on, because there were thousands of hippies getting saved and they didn't necessarily find the next step after baptism, the barber chair. And so when there were all these long-haired Christians, of course, there were the more conservative Christian people who were aghast by this, and they would constantly quote this verse.

It's a shame for a man to have long hair. Well, what I found amazing was that almost every preacher who ever preached that verse had a wife with short hair, which I found to be very shameful. I mean, the Apostle Paul is not trying to give a teaching about how long a man's hair ought to be.

He even only mentions man's hair length in order to give strength to his statement, the upshot of that, which is verse 15, but if a woman has long hair, it's a glory. Now, a glory and a shame are the two things. If a man had long hair, it was a shame.

If a woman had long hair, it was a glory. Now, obviously, there's as much admonishing women to have long hair as there is admonishing a man to have short hair. If one is binding upon all Christians of all times, then both must be.

And it certainly seems from the context of the whole passage that his real interest is in talking about women's hair more than men's, or women's coverings instead of men's coverings. He usually introduces the question of what seems proper for men only to show the contrast in women. As when he says, for instance, in verse 4, every man praying or prophesying with having his head covered dishonors his head, but every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered, she dishonors her head.

And of course, it's the woman that he's mainly talking about in this chapter, about her being in her place. And he often brings up the case of men just to show the difference between what is expected of men and expected of women. But as I pointed out, throughout this whole chapter, the word dishonor and shame, and comely or uncomely, are all terms that suggest a question of how society looks at things.

Now, one of the great problems with using 1 Corinthians 11.14 to forbid Christian men from having their hair longer than the average is, well, A, what's long? What's long hair anymore? Now, it was not too hard to distinguish in the early 70s when every man who wasn't a hippie had his hair shaved up the side, and there was nothing touching the ear. And then the hippies come along and grew their hair out like women. Well, that was very clearly, there were some clear lines drawn between short hair and long hair.

But unfortunately, well, fortunately or unfortunately, probably it's fortunate, I think, we now live in a time where if you look around the room, there's no one in this room that would probably be regarded as a hippie. Rob probably comes closest. But even his hair length wouldn't be regarded as, wouldn't shock anybody in our society at all, even if they heard he was a Christian with his hair that length.

I doubt if there's one Christian in 10,000 who would quote this verse at him, because his hair is not really that long now. Right. But the point is, I mean, look around.

Clint's hair length would have been considered too long for a man in the early 70s. I mean, among conservatives, because his hair is over his ears. And yet we regard, when I think of Clint, I think of his clean cut, you know, and the same thing with Ron or Brian, you know.

But and now Bill still wears his hair fairly conserved, but I think that's even a little longer on the side than was most common back then. I don't know if that's true. I see.

But, you know, it's as common as can be to see conservative pastors with hair that's, you know, over the top of their ears or something. Now it's just styles change. And so when Paul says for a man to have long hair, what do you mean? What do you mean long? You

know, touching the collar is that long or touching the top of the ear is that long or, you know, is it halfway down the back or what? I think what's very clear is that in the culture that Paul is addressing, there were clear cut differences in the length of men's hair and women's hair.

Women probably, since they regarded covering their head as the right thing, probably normally didn't cut their hair at all, as was true in an awful lot of cultures until recent times. But it may well be that women never cut their hair and therefore their hair was very long and that men normally did keep their hair short. You can look at the busts and the pictures of both the Greek and the Roman leaders and soldiers and generals and so forth that exist that have come down to it.

They all have, you know, closely cropped hair. So it seems like that was the custom among the Greeks for the men to have very short hair and the women to have very long hair. And there was no question about when a man's hair was in the category of a woman's length and when it was in the category of a man's length.

That is not so clear cut in our society and it's rather difficult now. Now, in the Old Testament, as you know, you just finished Deuteronomy, I believe it's there that God said it's an abomination for a man to wear that which pertains to a woman. And for a woman to wear that which pertains to a man.

In Corinth, long hair pertained to a woman, not to a man. But I don't know if that could be said to be true in our society. Even though men aren't all wearing their hair long now, most women aren't wearing their hair long either.

So it's difficult to say that any particular hair length in our society could be regarded as a male haircut or a female haircut. You know, I mean, there's not some distinctive... It's the same thing with clothing styles. I mean, today, women wear t-shirts and blue jeans.

And maybe a generation ago or two, I don't know how long ago you'd have to go, but not too long ago, those would be regarded as men's clothing. But today, they're not regarded as men's clothing. I mean, the question is, what does society recognize as appropriate clothing for men and what's appropriate for women? Makeup and earrings, until very recently, was regarded as strictly for women.

But now, an awful lot of men wear at least earrings, and occasionally, you meet them with makeup. And I guarantee I'm not ever going to wear either, but I don't have any reason to judge those who do, simply because I'm not so sure there's such clear-cut boundaries in our society between what kind of style is acceptable for men and what is for women. For a man in Corinth to wear his hair long, he would be deliberately wearing a style that was feminine.

There's a difference between deliberately trying to take on the accoutrements of a

female for a man and a man having long hair because a lot of men have long hair. I remember when the hippies were still new, my grandfather came, why would these men want to wear their hair like women? And I said, well, I don't think they really want to look like women. I think they just want to look like long-haired men.

There were an awful lot of long-haired men they were trying to identify with or be a part of that movement. They weren't so much trying to be transvestite as just part of a particular counter-cultural movement where the men have to wear long hair. And that's a different thing than trying to cast off your sexual identity and take on the dress and styles of the opposite sex.

I don't think the hippies ever intended that because most of them wore their beards as well, which seemed to prove that point. But I think this is cultural. I think it doesn't have an awful lot to do with our society, except insofar as today there may still be some things that are, strictly speaking, regarded as male or female style.

In which case, if a man deliberately takes on a female style because he wants to rebel against his sexual identity, and there are transvestites today, I think that would be as much an abomination and a shame as for a man maybe to have long hair in Corinth. Yeah, Tim? I have one brother and one brother-in-law. Both are good Christians and they both have earrings.

So it's pretty close to my home. But I never even liked the idea of women wearing earrings, to tell you the truth. So I'm not going to wear one myself.

But it's not so much a sexual thing. It's more of a question of whether I like the idea. The study of the Scriptures is not a simple or simplistic thing.

Some people just want to take the Bible like it's a magic book and everything it says just glows from the page and you just take it at face value without any interpretation or anything. And others, of course, regard it as less than divine altogether. I think an intelligent approach is that you recognize the Bible for what it is.

It's the product of Christian leaders. At least the New Testament is the product of the revelation that God gave to Christian leaders set in a setting of books that were written to people in a certain particular setting. And there are times when it's very, most of the time it's very obvious.

There may be times where it's not very obvious, but most of the time it's very obvious whether the instructions are culture-bound or whether they are being presented as though they're universal principles. For instance, Paul's mention of homosexuality in Romans chapter 1. He very clearly states that it's a very evil thing that all cultures degenerate into when they reject the knowledge of God. You know, well, Paul's not talking about one particular culture or one particular period of time.

He says basically when cultures refuse to believe in the God that has revealed himself to them, God gives them over to wretched states of mind that lead eventually to homosexual behavior, which obviously is represented as something which is perverted in itself. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9 and following where it talks about homosexual behavior there, Paul says that those people who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. He doesn't say Corinthians who do those things or any other particular cultural group.

He says anyone who does those things, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. And of course, he has the law on his side too, as far as the Old Testament is concerned. If someone says, well, Paul was based on a Jewish background, well, maybe so, but what was his Jewish background? He was essentially agreeing with the law that he would have been trained as a Jew, which says that for a man to lie with a man as one lies with a woman is an abomination.

So I think on the matter of homosexuality, we'd have to say that every passage in the Bible on the subject supports the idea that it is truly a moral issue. But there are some passages where maybe reading between the lines is not always safe, but there are times where it seems necessary to read between the lines, or even in this case you don't have to because Paul says we have no such custom. He seems to be saying he's given culturally based and culture bound instructions to those people that are not universal.

He says we don't have these customs among us, but you do, and therefore you should observe this. There's some things that are very difficult. Like, I've mentioned several times, the woman's issue that Paul deals with in 1 Timothy 2, but I don't permit a woman to teach.

Well, many people understand that's a culture bound bit of instruction. But I believe in that passage Paul states what the basis of his instruction is. It has to do with the created order, it has to do with the fall.

Those are things that don't have anything to do with culture, it just has to do with reality. Well, about a woman wearing her head, well, I think what he's saying is the woman, because she was created second and for the man, needs to acknowledge her role as being under the headship of her husband. The particular cultural expression of that acknowledgement was in the wearing of veils and corranants.

The same reality could be acknowledged by a woman wearing a ring today, a wedding ring, or changing her name to her husband's name, or in many other ways, just basically showing her submission to her husband. But a person who would not wear a veil, a woman who wouldn't wear a veil in that sense, I was basically advertising her freedom from her husband's authority. And I think that Paul does make reference to the creation in it, but he also says we don't have any such custom.

So I think that what that probably means is that the underlying principles upon which these instructions are based, these principles are universal and they date back to the creation, but the actual instruction, the cultural instruction, is limited to the culture of the Greeks with respect to the head cover. Now, different people of course will take this in different ways. This is the way I, from my study of the passage, feel compelled to understand it, but others have other views.

Robby? Well, clothing should be modest. No matter what culture a person lives in, the purpose of clothing is to cover a person's nakedness. When clothing does not very adequately cover nakedness, but rather accentuates it or draws attention to parts of the body that are intended to be covered, and some clothing is designed just to do that very thing, I would say it is not serving the biblical function of clothing.

And see, clothing has a biblical basis because God made clothing for Adam and Eve. So the word of clothing, there is a biblically ordained basis for clothing, and clothing that doesn't cover or that draws attention to those things that ought to be covered is not biblical clothing. It's not modest, and that's what I would say about that.

One other line here, just one line we didn't comment on in this first part, is at the end of verse 15, it says, for her hair is given to her for a covering, or actually literally in the Greek, for a veil. Now, he's just said it's a glory for a woman to have long hair. It seems to be saying that if she has long hair, she may not need to wear a veil because God has given her long hair to be a veil for her, to take the place of a veil.

Now again, since this is, I believe, mostly cultural instruction, it doesn't necessarily tell us whether or not women today should wear long hair or short hair. But it does say that, at least in Corinth, where veils were regarded as appropriate, that a woman should be able to see her long hair as serving the function of a veil. And perhaps therefore she need not, well, it's a hard thing to say because earlier he says if she's not going to wear a veil, she should cut her hair too.

But I think what he's saying is that the very fact that God has, it almost seems like he's saying God has ordained long hair on women, but because he's given her her long hair for a veil. He might be referring to the fact that in most cases, and whether Paul knew this from experiment to be true or not, I don't know, but in most cases women can grow their hair longer than men can. Although both can grow their hair quite long.

In fact, in most cases they can grow their hair longer than custom would dictate. But most, in general, now I've seen men with hair quite amazingly long, but in general most women's hair, I think, grows longer than most men's. It's just left to itself.

Now I may be making a generalization that wouldn't hold up under laboratory tests, but as I understand it, I've seen women and men who both didn't cut their hair at all for years. And in just about every case the woman's hair got longer than the men's did

before it stopped growing. At any rate, Paul may have been referring to the fact that women's hair does have a tendency to grow longer, or he might be suggesting that God simply has ordained women to wear their hair longer to take the place of a veil.

But that's a very, like verse 10, it's a very difficult statement because it almost the way it's worded, it sounds like her hair will serve for a veil instead of a veil. But he earlier said that she should wear a veil as well as having long hair, or if she didn't wear a veil she should cut her hair to signify the same thing. So there are some problems here, which we would probably understand a lot better if we knew more, as the Corinthians did, their own circumstance and what particular problem he was addressing.

There was no doubt a group of women in the church who were challenging the customs in one way or another. We don't fully understand what those customs were, nor do we fully understand in what way they were being challenged. But I'm sure that the Corinthians would have been able to make good sense out of whatever it is Paul said here, whereas we, being unfortunately removed by a couple thousand years from the scene, do not understand exactly what the issue was he was addressing in every point, like verse 10.

But I'm sure that he wrote in words that they would have understood, and we may just have to content ourselves in a few cases with saying, I don't know what this means, but they did. We can only guess, in some cases, what it might have meant. I actually hope to cover the whole chapter today.

The second half is very important also, so we'll obviously have to take another day for that, that puts us behind one day in our studies of the Corinthians, unfortunately. But we'll work it out.