

## God's Order of Headship

**Lesson Scope:** [1 Corinthians 11:1-16](#)

### Lesson Focus

Paul continued to correct the confusion in the church at Corinth. These Gentile believers had laid aside their heathen customs to follow the Lord Jesus. At the same time, the church was laying aside many Jewish customs related to the Old Testament Law. Paul needed to explain the Communion ordinance in contrast with the Jewish Passover feast and the idolatrous heathen feasts. He also needed to explain the Christian woman's veiling in relation to the customs of the time.

According to the culture of that day, modest women veiled themselves in public, but immoral women went about unveiled. Some of the Christians at Corinth may have believed that the veil was merely cultural and could be discontinued along with other Jewish customs. Paul helped the Corinthians to understand that the veiling is not merely cultural. It symbolizes the divine order of headship established at Creation, and it is to be used by Christian women just as certainly as it was used by godly women since the beginning.

God has established His order of headship: God, Christ, man, woman. As men and women fill their respective roles, they secure their own fulfillment and serve God's all-wise purposes.

This lesson is a foundational part of Christian doctrine. When the doctrine of headship is not taught, the practice of wearing the veiling is soon lost. Think about the standards your church has for the veiling, and think of the reasons why they are given. Small deviations in the practice of the veiling easily lead to its loss.

**Lesson Aim:** To outline God's order of headship and explain the significance of the Christian woman's veiling.

**Theme Verse:** [1 Corinthians 11:3](#). But I would have you 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.

## Lesson Text

### Divine Order

1 Corinthians 11:1-3 <sup>1</sup> Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ. <sup>2</sup> Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you. <sup>3</sup> But I would have you 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.

### Visible Ordinance

1 Corinthians 11:4-7 <sup>4</sup> Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. <sup>6</sup> For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. <sup>7</sup> 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 glory of the man.

### Mutual Dependence

1 Corinthians 11:8-12 <sup>8</sup> For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. <sup>10</sup> For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. <sup>12</sup> For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

### Natural Propriety

1 Corinthians 11:13-16 <sup>13</sup> Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? <sup>15</sup> But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Divine Order**

1. Compare the members in God's order of headship in regard to their authority and ability.
2. What Biblical evidence do we have that the Christian woman's veiling is relevant today?

### **Visible Ordinance**

3. Why is a visible sign needed for the woman but not for the man?
4. How can we maintain the practice of the Christian woman's veiling?

### **Mutual Dependence**

5. Does verse 10 suggest that the veiled woman has more angelic protection than other people do? Explain.
6. What attitudes are required for God's headship plan to work?

### **Natural Propriety**

7. How does the godless society around us confirm the truth of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15?
8. What blessings come as we follow God's headship plan?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

In verse 1, Paul highlighted the fact that he was under the authority of the Lord Jesus. He was using this to establish the principle of God's order of headship. All delegated authority is under higher authority.

The Greek word for ordinances (1 Corinthians 11:2) is usually translated traditions. It is not consistent to practice Communion (the second of the ordinances in this chapter) while refusing to practice the Christian woman's veiling.

Verse 3 clearly points out the order of headship. Even though both the Father and Christ are part of the Godhead, Christ is subject to the Father. The same principle is true in the earthly relationship of man and woman. Man and woman are equal, but man has been assigned the role of leadership.

Uncovered (1 Corinthians 11:5) means "unveiled." Carefully reading 1 Corinthians 11:5-6 reveals that the veil covering is not the same as the hair covering. Covering (1 Corinthians 11:15) means "something that is thrown around; a mantle." Its meaning also suggests wrapping around.

In 1 Corinthians 11:16 Paul points out that man is responsible if headship matters are out of order.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Divine Order**

1. God has established the order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:1-3). God, the Creator, made man in His own image, but below Him in authority and ability. God created woman to be man's helper—equal to man in ability, but below him in authority. When man or woman side-steps this plan, confusion reigns in the home, in the church, and in the workplace.

2. God's order of headship is universal (1 Corinthians 11:3). Many people have shrugged off the teachings of this chapter as being only for the culture at Corinth. But Paul said in this same letter that he taught the same things in all the churches and that his writings are the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:17; 14:37). In both the Old and the New Testament eras, godly women have shown their submission to God's plan and man's authority by their veiled heads.

### **Visible Ordinance**

3. Man's unveiled head signifies his submission to God's order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:4, 7). Man was created in the image of God; therefore his head is unveiled to reflect that image. The glory of Christ must be displayed in the life and testimony of a godly man.

4. Woman's veiled head marks her submission to God's order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:5, 7). The woman was created as a help meet (suitable) for man. A woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors man. The glory of the man (his helper, the woman) is not to be put on display, so that Christ can be honored. The glory of the woman (her long hair) is not for public display either.

5. For a woman to be unveiled is a shame (1 Corinthians 11:5). In Corinthian society, an unveiled woman was classed with the harlots in the heathen temple. Paul said they could just as well have had their heads completely shaved to show their lack of moral uprightness. Women who refuse to wear a veiling contribute to the degradation of women in their society.

Those who practice the God-ordained ordinance of the Christian woman's veiling are in the minority. Many have eventually dropped this ordinance because they allowed innovations in the way they practiced it. We must see the necessity of wearing it at all times, not just for public

worship. The practice of wearing the traditional style of veiling aids in maintaining a Biblical standard.

### **Mutual Dependence**

6. The properly veiled woman is worthy of protection by the holy angels (1 Corinthians 11:10). When a woman lives in obedience to God, His power and authority are on her side. He blesses her with the protection of the angels, who minister to the saints in many ways.

7. Men and women both fill important roles in God's order (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). As they fill their respective places in submission to God's order, each helps the other to fill his place. What better testimony is left than when the man takes his role as leader and breadwinner of the home, and the woman happily fills her place as supporter and follower of her husband!

### **Natural Propriety**

8. Natural propriety dictates short hair for men and long veiled hair for women (1 Corinthians 11:13-15). This is an example of how even natural reasoning supports revealed truth. In a general way, current society follows this principle. Most men wear their hair shorter than most women do.

9. The consistent practice of this ordinance brings rest and dispels confusion (1 Corinthians 11:16). The effects of the modern effort to "liberate" women can be seen all around us. Broken homes abound in our communities because God's principles have been violated. Women have been robbed of their distinctive role in God's plan, and social confusion has followed. As women follow God's plan for them, many spiritual and social blessings follow.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God has established the order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:1-3).
2. God's order of headship is universal (1 Corinthians 11:3).
3. Man's unveiled head signifies his submission to God's order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:4, 7).
4. Woman's veiled head marks her submission to God's order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:5, 7).
5. For a woman to be unveiled is a shame (1 Corinthians 11:5).

6. The properly veiled woman is worthy of protection by the holy angels (1 Corinthians 11:10).
7. Men and women both fill important roles in God's order (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).
8. Natural propriety dictates short hair for men and long veiled hair for women (1 Corinthians 11:13-15).
9. The consistent practice of this ordinance brings rest and dispels confusion (1 Corinthians 11:16).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Compare the members in God's order of headship in regard to their authority and ability.

God the Father is over all, and He is all-powerful. Christ is equal to the Father in ability, but He is answerable to the Father. Man as leader is head of the woman, but he is far inferior to God. Woman is equal to man in abilities but is answerable to man as her head.

2. What Biblical evidence do we have that the Christian woman's veiling is relevant today?

1 Corinthians 14:37 points out that Paul was writing the commandments of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says that Paul taught the same things in every church. The Bible is God's direction to man. Many churches practice Communion, taught in this same chapter, but they explain this teaching away.

3. Why is a visible sign needed for the woman but not for the man?

The praying woman needs a visible sign to show she is submitted to her visible head, the man. Man's head, Christ, is not visible; therefore no sign is needed.

4. How can we maintain the practice of the Christian woman's veiling?

To maintain the practice, we must consistently teach God's order of headship. Hairstyles must remain appropriate with what the veiling represents. The church must give the clear direction and discipline needed for a unified practice.

5. Does verse 10 suggest that the veiled woman has more angelic protection than other people do? Explain.

Yes. Psalm 34:7 and 91:11; and Matthew 18:10 confirm the fact that angels play an important role in protecting God's people. A woman who lives in submission to God's order of headship and veils her head is eli-

gible to receive the ministry and protection that God's angels give to all godly people.

6. What attitudes are required for God's headship plan to work?

The man must take seriously his responsibility as leader so that the woman can find security under his leadership. The woman must live in submission to her head, even though his leadership is not perfect. Teamwork is required; each must sense his need of the other.

7. How does the godless society around us confirm the truth of verses 14 and 15?

Men still tend to wear their hair shorter than women do. A man with extra-long hair communicates an independent and rebellious spirit. A woman with uncut hair, if it is worn modestly, is identified as one with high morals.

8. What blessings come as we follow God's headship plan?

The home atmosphere is marked by joy and peace. We can pass on the faith to the rising generation. Others can be attracted to the faith as they see homes staying together. God shows His favor and provides angelic protection.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1 Peter 3:5-6).

### **Research Guide**

1. Read the chapter titled "The Devotional Covering" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.