

1 Corinthians Part Two

Lesson #9, Chapter 11:1-16

Please read all of Chapter 11 before beginning this lesson. If you have time, include Chapter 10 in your reading. Be sure to beseech the Lord for His help in studying and understanding this section of Scripture. You're going to love what God has written in His Word in this week's study!

1. Many commentators feel that 1 Corinthians 11:1 should conclude Paul's instructions at the end of Chapter 10, yet it could also fit quite naturally with the opening comments in Chapter 11. No matter which chapter it should rest in, what message comes through loud and clear when you read verse 1?
 - a. How should we imitate Paul's example in *Chapter 10*?
 - b. If we are to imitate Paul's example in *Chapter 11* what should we focus on? Just briefly give an answer.

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2. Why was Paul praising the Corinthians in verse 2? What does that tell you about Paul and his ministry to the Corinthians? See also Acts 18:8, 11; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6.
3. Though Paul is encouraged by the Corinthians' response to the Word of God, he did have some concerns about their understanding on some spiritual issues. What subject does he bring up now in verse 3?
4. This topic has something to do with some practices that were developing within the church at Corinth. Based on a cursory reading of 11:1-16 what would you say was happening at that time within the church that was causing Paul some concern?

5. First Corinthians 11:1-16 has been called one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament to interpret. I can guarantee we won't be able to answer every question you have about this passage, but I do think we will come away with a clearer understanding of what God intends for us to understand today. Let's see what we can figure out as we study the Scriptures for ourselves.
 - a. *First of all, verse 3 is the key to understanding this section of Chapter 11.* This means everything that Paul says in verses 4-16 supports his statements in verse 3. Restate Paul's comments from verse 3.
 - b. Explain how Paul uses the word *head* in verse 3. What is its meaning here?

c. Now explain how Paul uses the word *head* in the beginning of verse 4 and the beginning of verse 5.

d. The two different uses for the same word make this section of Scripture a challenge to interpret, but not impossible. Paul was using a spiritual truth to correct a true to life problem plaguing the church in Corinth. Why is it important to first understand God's plans for mankind before applying those spiritual principles to everyday life, rather than trying to apply spiritual principles without a real understanding of what God desires for our lives?

6. How does a man disgrace his head according to verse 4? Who is man's head according to verse 3?

7. The Corinthian church was largely a Gentile congregation, yet for any Jewish believers this instruction may have been difficult to hear. Why is that? See 2 Sam. 15:30 for a hint.
 - a. Yet it's apparent that even the Gentile converts had traditions about head coverings as we can surmise from the instructions in this chapter. What did both the Jewish and Gentile believers need to understand and do when they received the teaching given here? See verse 2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8.
8. How does a woman disgrace her head according to verse 5? Who is she compared to in verse 5? Who is woman's head according to verse 3?

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9. Even today a woman with a shaved head (barring health reasons) is often making a statement of some kind about herself and her beliefs. Please explain how, even now, a woman's shaved head can often be traced to a reaction to verse 3.
10. When was it possible for a man or a woman to disgrace themselves according to verses 4-5? How does that information give insight into Paul's goals for his instruction for the Corinthians in Chapter 11?

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11. Verse 6 further explains verse 5, so take some time to rewrite verse 6 in your own words. Be sure to include *while praying or prophesying* in your version of verse 6. It will help clarify the meaning.
12. The practical applications for the spiritual principles of verse 3 are displayed in verse 7. A man shouldn't cover his head while praying or prophesying in the church because _____. While a woman should cover her head while praying or prophesying in the church because _____.
13. In verses 8-9 we learn another of the reasons for the order established within the church. What is it?

a. What is this pattern based upon? See Gen. 2:18-24; 1 Tim. 2:13.

14. What is the natural conclusion of God's design found in verses 8-9? See verse 10.

15. What do angels have to do with a woman submitting to God's order and design for the church? You'll have to pull the answer together after reading the following verses: Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:10; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:21; Heb. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:12.

Discovering the Treasures of the Word

16. What does Paul mean when he says in verse 11, *in the Lord*? Why would it have been tempting to argue for equality in this matter? See Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:7.
17. Clearly, God intends for there to be a hierarchy, an order to His church, and we see it explained again in verses 11-12. What nuances are added to the discussion in verses 11-12 when compared with verse 3 and verses 7-9?
18. Paul begins drawing his instruction to a close. In verse 13 he tells the Corinthians they need to judge for themselves and answer the question about whether it's proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered. What is their judgment to be based upon? See verses 3, 7-12.

Discovering the Treasures of the Word

19. He hammers the point home through an illustration from nature in verses 14-15. Unfortunately, Paul's illustration isn't as clear to us as it may have been to him or his hearers. If we look at “nature” in the animal world, we observe that the males have the longest hair, the brightest plumage, and the largest manes, which doesn't seem to help Paul's argument. So Paul must mean “nature” as it relates to humanity. The NIV helps shed some light on the topic. It reads, *Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him?* How would long hair on a man be a disgrace for him? Consider everything we've learned about women and their long hair as you answer.
20. Now, reviewing verses 2-15, what is the intended purpose of a woman's hair or head covering?
21. Now, let's evaluate what we've learned so far: What issue was plaguing the Corinthian church that Paul was trying to correct here in verses 1-15?

22. How is the instruction in this passage similar to 1 Tim. 2:8-14?
23. What's at the core of this passage that we need to understand and take to heart no matter when we live or what our culture is like?

Eager Beaver: How does this passage fall in line with what we've learned about applying our Christian liberties? See 8:9, 12-13; 10:32-33.

24. If we don't like what we've read or struggle to embrace these truths, what does Paul have to say about that? See verse 16 and 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Tim. 6:3-4; Titus 2:15; 3:8.
25. The God-made distinctions between men and women and our clearly defined roles within the church provide us with ample opportunity to put these spiritual principles to work in our worship. What attitudes need to undergird your response to the truths presented to us here by God in 1 Corinthians 11?

26. Remember that Paul's instruction in this passage (and all of chapter 11) was to correct some misunderstandings the Corinthians had about God's design for them and for church life. Their misunderstanding of Paul's teaching led to some "unique" ways the Corinthians sought to live out those principles. Verse 2 reminds us that Paul is giving them some practical ways to live out the principles he addresses in this chapter when he says talks about holding firmly to the traditions he had taught them. Their understanding of both the headcoverings issue and the Lord's Supper issue needed correction and more teaching.
- a. First, let's consider the wider context. Look at 8:1, 4; 10:31; 11:2, 16, 17, 12:1 to understand Paul's purpose in writing to the Corinthians.
- b. Next, what practices was Paul trying to correct in this section of his letter to the Corinthians? Look at 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.

c. What did the veil or headcovering signify in Corinthian culture?

d. Does our culture today have that same practice?

e. So, when some of the women in the Corinthian church misunderstood (or rebelled against) God's design and order for creation, the church, and the home by shaving their heads or not wearing a headcovering, what, in essence, were they communicating? What didn't they understand about God's design for the church and men and women in general?