

1 Corinthians 11:2-16: Men and Women in the Church

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1 Corinthians ` / 1 Corinthians 11:2–16

Introduction

- <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/person-dressed-bear-costume-fake-attacks-cars-insurance-payout-califor-rcna180075> - Absurd - Dress up all you want, a person is not a bear.
- Silly enough - but you live in a culture that is very much confused about what constitutes a person. In the last twenty years, culture has majorly shifted. First, it was the acceptance of homosexual marriage. Then, the rise of transgenderism. Now, a culture that celebrates when someone chooses to live out a gender contrary to the way God made them. We live in a culture that is highly confused about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. It's heartbreaking.
- BUT... it's not just a problem outside the church. It's a problem within the church. Most of us do not struggle with confusion about gender. You would agree that your gender is the sex God created you as. However, we are often confused about what it means to be a God-honoring man or a God-honoring woman.
- [1 Corinthians 11](#) - one of most difficult passages in the NT to understand because we don't know the entire cultural context, and at first glance it doesn't seem like this passage has any relevance for us. On a surface reading, the passage simply seems to be about women wearing head coverings in public worship and men not wearing head coverings in public worship. It seems like something that's very outdated for us and exclusive to an ancient Christian culture. However, there's much more going on here than Paul wanting women to wear hats to worship.

There's much here about what it means to be a man or a woman made in the image of God and celebrating God's design in corporate worship.

- Two truths from this passage to help us live as the men and women God has made us to be.

You need to be the man or woman God has designed you to be.

- A new section in the letter. [1 Corinthians 8-10](#) - should we eat meat sacrificed to idols? [1 Corinthians 11-14](#) - What should we do when we gather for worship?
- Something taking place in the culture that would cause Paul advise women to have head coverings in worship while advising men to keep their heads uncovered.
- We don't know what Paul means when he refers to head coverings - could be referring to a woman veiling her head in worship or having long hair. We do know that Paul advises against men having long hair and advises men to keep their heads uncovered in worship.
- Bottom line: men need to come to worship as men, and women should come to worship as women.
- Likely an influence from the pagan culture - perhaps the worship of Dionysus - god of wine who was presented with both masculine and feminine qualities. (Dionysus celebrated at Paris Olympics.) Worship of Dionysus included lots of drunkenness and sexual immorality. Homosexuality was flagrant in pagan worship, and crossdressing was even involved Dionysus worship. Also, some evidence that in pagan worship men would cover their heads by pulling their togas over their heads.
- Paul to believers in Corinth: Worship among the assembly of God's people should be very different than worship of pagans. Worship God as

who you are - without confusion about who God made you to be as a godly man or godly woman. There is something deeply theological that God is communicating through you living as the godly man or the godly woman God created you to be.

- Head coverings in the early church communicated authority and gender distinction. (Head = source or authority. Most often used in NT to mean authority.)
- Christ is the head of every man. Jesus is over all because of His death and resurrection. He has made a way for us to be right with the true God of all creation. As a result of His death and resurrection He is Lord. Men, we answer to God for how we live for Jesus and love our families. We do not answer to our culture. Jesus is authority over our lives, and the One who is in authority over men calls men to live out their distinctive manhood by being the spiritual leaders of their homes ([Ephesians 5:22-33](#)). vs. 7 - a man is the image and glory of God, woman is the glory of man. Man created first ([Gen. 2](#)), and woman created to compliment man as his helpmate.
- Man is the head of the woman. Paul communicating about the roles of husband and wives ([Ephesians 5:22](#) - Wives to voluntarily follow the spiritual leadership of their husbands with a willing heart.) At the same time, women have a prominent role in public worship. Paul NOT saying that a woman is not equal in dignity to men. Women are spiritually gifted like men to serve in corporate worship (prophesy). Yet, the woman has a unique role in her relationship with her husband (vs. 7-9, [Ephesians 5](#)). vs. 10 - a symbol of authority over head because of angels? I have no idea what this means, but something about angels observing our worship.
- Man and woman are interdependent (vs.8-9). One is not better than the other. For the flourishing of human society, we need each other.

- To not live out God's design is shameful (vs.6, 13-16). Honor/shame culture. It is always shameful to live outside God's design.
- Gathered together in God's presence, we need to demonstrate that we understand God's design for man and woman. Something about head coverings in this ancient culture that communicated gender distinctiveness and an understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood.
- God is head of Christ. The Son is equal to the Father in divinity but distinct in roles. When on earth, Jesus did His Father's will while at the same time, not giving us His divinity. Likewise, men and women are equal but different. Men are NOT superior to women. We are of equal value before God. Both sexes are made in the image of God and both are gifted by God for His purpose. BUT, different roles. In the home, men carry the weight of spiritual leadership. In the church, the role of elder/pastor falls to men. BUT, at same time, we realize the need for godly women to lead out in many areas of the church.
- This passage isn't so much about head coverings as it is about understanding the unique role of men and women. In a culture like ours that is confused about gender, this is a strong and needed word because:
- **Our culture desperately needs strong, godly men.**
 - You live in a culture where you are encouraged to question and deny God's good and distinct design of our bodies as male and female. You're told that gender is fluid. You're told that men who identify as women can participate in women's sports. You're told that a child should be able to transition to another gender. Church, we cannot be ambivalent on this issue. Perhaps the best way to combat the lie of the world is to live well as who God called us to be.

- Men who prioritize their marriages and families. Men who put away selfish desires of pursuing career and hobbies over pursuing God and family.
- Men who love sacrificially. What if you loved your wife like Jesus? Jesus wasn't oppressive. Jesus wasn't abusive. Jesus didn't demean. Jesus didn't devalue. Jesus lifted up. Jesus blessed. Jesus died for those He loved. That's how men are called to love.
- Men who lead boldly. Not forcefully, nor as a dictator. But, lead by example. "Let me show you what it means to live out the fruit of the Spirit."
- Men who are not passive. Who do not sit idly by and let the enemy attack their family but men who fight for godliness in their own lives and then take responsibility for the spiritual development of their children. Men who guard and protect their wives and children from the enemy. Who can lead their families in the Word so that your family can know God's design.
- Men, let us help you. Let us disciple you and hold you accountable for becoming the kind of man God has called you to be.
- **Our culture desperately needs strong, godly women.**
- Women who joyously submit to Christ.
- Women who see the unique work God is doing in them for His glory.
- Women who encourage the spiritual growth they see in their husbands and who commit to pray for them.
- Women who use their spiritual giftedness for Kingdom.
- **Our culture desperately needs our compassion; not our scorn.**
- We must be firmly and unapologetically biblical.
- We must engage in gracious, Gospel centered conversations.

- We must be willing to model God's design well.
- We must pray.

We need to be zealous for the glory of God in corporate worship.

- Paul giving these instructions to a congregation concerning public worship. What we do when we gather for worship matters.
- **Corporate worship is always on God's terms.** Not about how we feel or what we want in the moment, but how does God want us to respond to Him? What does He desire from us when we gather? In this passage, He desires us to come together with an understanding of His authority and how we respond to it as men and women.
- **Corporate worship is always a reminder of God's redemptive work.** Worship is an opportunity to be reminded of who God is, who we are, what God has done, and what God is going to do. God is holy. We are not. Yet, God has changed us by His Son, and He is going to return some day and make everything right. We live in a broken world where confusion reigns, but confusion will not reign forever. Worship is a reminder of who you used to be and who you are now ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)).
- **Corporate worship is always an opportunity to experience God and be brought into alignment with His will.** Right now, God is present. Right now, as we gather around His Word and we trust the Spirit to work in our hearts through His Word, we are encountering God. He is reminding you of His design. He is removing the confusion that our culture has stirred up. He is convicting some of you men to live as a God-honoring man who sacrificially loves his wife and family, who does whatever it takes to help his family grow in Christ. He's convicting some of you women to live as God-honoring women - who joyfully submits to Christ and His design.

- For others, God is calling you to Himself. He wants to remove the confusion from your heart as to who the true God really is. The true God is the One who made you in His image for His glory. The true God is the One who has designed you for Himself, who loves you so much that He sent His Son to pay the penalty for your sin so that your sins might be forgiven. The Jesus who died for you rose from the dead to secure eternal life for you and to change your life from sinner to saint. Turn from your sin, turn from the lies of this world, and embrace the truth.