

**>> The Called**

**God has come into creation to restore and renew it, make it good again, to make it radiate with his life, joy and peace again. How? By becoming its Good King.**

- When Jesus, the Good King came he said “Repent...for the kingdom of God is hand”
- And now, generations later, all over the world, people name Him as King, honor Him and are learning to follow Him as King.
- And as we do that, as we do His good will more and more, His kingdom comes more and more into our lives...along with the blessings of His presence. His kingdom advances.

**How does God do that today?**

- Through His word. Written, preserved, and then illuminated for us by His Spirit as His people gather together.
- We gather around God’s word, to let Him speak into our lives.
- Through this letter, 1 Corinthians, and the rest of the Bible, God the King calls us and teaches us to live more fully as His people:
  - He renews and restores our minds – He reveals the truth, what really is, helps us take off old, faulty, distorted ways of thinking.
  - He renews our heart, our emotions – He speaks what is true, in love, to heal and bind up our hurts
  - He calls to grow, to mature, to become people who more and more shine His goodness, life, love, joy and peace into His world.

**<>** So, that’s what we do here every Sunday.

We go to His word and let Him speak to us, renew us.

**Now, 2 disclaimers before we read the passage today...**

1. **It is a complex, difficult passage** that many pastors, perhaps wisely, skip when they do a message series.
2. **One reason it's difficult** is that we, many years later in a different culture than 1<sup>st</sup> Corinth are listening to an ongoing conversation between Paul and the church.
  - Paul started the church, raised up some leaders, left to go start churches elsewhere.
  - He stays in touch through letters, through people going back and forth to the church, to make sure they're doing well and to help them with problems that arise.
  - But we only have what He has written

**Our goal is try to understand as best we can what was happening at Corinth**, so we can unwrap the **principles** Paul was applying to their situation, and apply them to our own situation today.

<> I'm going to start off with a reconstruction of what the Corinthians might be saying to Paul and asking him.

**Scholar Richard Hays** wrote this reconstruction, and I made some modifications to it:...

>> Dear Paul, We remember you fondly and wish that we could see you again. Some of us are trying to maintain the traditions you taught us, such as the tradition we learned at our baptism

>> that IN CHRIST there is no longer any distinction between male and female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free person.

You would be glad to know that, when we all come together for worship,

>> the women continue to participate along with the men in praying and prophesying freely, under the inspiration of the Spirit, just as they did when you were here with us.

>> But a dispute has now arisen on one point: some of the women, acting in the freedom and power of the Spirit, have begun to loose their hair [let it down] when they prophesy, as an expression of their freedom in Christ.

>> Some members of the community have objected to this, saying it is inappropriate and offensive for women to let their hair down in public.

>> Most of us believe, however, that you would approve of this practice, since it is an outward and visible sign of the truth of the tradition we received from you.

>> We would be grateful if you could comment directly on this matter in order to dispel any doubt about this point. Sincerely, The church in Corinth

### Hair or Head covering?

- Some scholars would argue that problem was not that the women were unbinding and letting loose their hair, but rather, but removing their head covering.
- Evidence can point to either ,but I'm sticking with hair because Paul talks about it throughout. But the effect is the same.
- **In public**, in 1<sup>st</sup> century Corinth, that Greco-Roman city, there was a public, social practice for women of either binding up their hair in public or covering it with a veil of some kind as a sign of modesty, a sign respect to their husbands.
- **At home** woman would unbind their hair or remove the covering.

**A question they had: But what about at church? What do we do there?**

Paul then responds to this kind of report or letter from the church at Corinth. Let's listen to what he says...

## 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

>> <sup>2</sup> ***I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions, just as I passed them on to you.*** [Good job y'all]

>> <sup>3</sup> ***But I want you to realize*** [I want you to appreciate, I want you to be aware] ***that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.***

That's is framework Paul has, a principle that he will now apply to this issue:

>> <sup>4</sup> ***Every man who prays or prophesies with his head*** [physical head] ***covered dishonors his head.*** [dishonors Christ]

>> <sup>5</sup> ***But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered*** [physical head] ***dishonors her head*** [man or husband; same word in Greek] ***—it is the same as having her head shaved.***

>> <sup>6</sup> ***For if a woman does not cover her head*** [physical head], ***she might as well have her hair cut off*** [which was totally shameful and disgraceful in that culture]; ***but if*** [or in Greek "since"] ***it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.***

>> <sup>7</sup> ***A man ought not to cover his head,*** [physical head] ***since*** [and here Paul appeals to another principle] ***he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.***

>> <sup>8</sup> ***For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;*** <sup>9</sup> ***neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.*** [That's going back to Genesis 2. Then he applies that principle to their situation again...]

>> <sup>10</sup> ***It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority*** [exercise authority] ***over her own head*** [physical head – i.e. she should take responsibility for covering her head or binding her hair], ***because of the angels.*** [Strange right? Best interp I've heard is that it's assumed angels are present when they worship, gather as God's people, in Jesus' name. Same today. We can't see God's Spirit here, but He's here. And, we can safely assume, some angelic presence as well. Angels are God's servants. Cf. 1 Tim 5:21, Heb 1:7,14, 12:22, 13:2; Rev 2:1,8, 12, 18; 3:1,7,14. The point seems to be: improper worship offends God, offends His angels].

>> <sup>11</sup> ***Nevertheless, in the Lord*** [now that we are in Jesus, The Called, now that we are in the Lord here are some principles...] ***woman is not independent of man, NOR is man independent of woman.*** <sup>12</sup> ***For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But*** [or and] ***everything comes from God.***

Then Paul goes back to the head covering issue:

>> <sup>13</sup> ***Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?***

>> <sup>14</sup> ***Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,*** <sup>15</sup> ***but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.*** [That's why the head covering that has been spoken about is likely hair...not a veil of some kind.]

And then Paul ends with...v.16

>> <sup>16</sup> ***If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.***

- Paul is applying some important principles to how they are acting in their worship services.
- What they do with their hair, how they cover or uncover their hair, carries a cultural signal, a message, in their culture.
- A message that potentially conveys honor or dishonor, glory or disgrace.

Again, our goal to unwrap the timeless principles here from the culture-bound social conventions back then, so we can then apply those principles today.

### **First principle, Paul gives a picture of order.**

He wrote to them...

>> <sup>3</sup> ***But I want you to realize*** [I want you to appreciate, I want you to be aware] ***that the head of every man [aner an-EHR] is Christ, and the head of the woman [gune goo-NAY] is man, and the head of Christ is God.***

That's a picture...

>> God (the Father)

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Christ (God the Son)

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Man/Husband

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Woman/Wife

- **Difficulty #1:** *aner* is the Greek word for man or husband; *gune* means woman or wife. Is Paul talking about husband-wife or men-women in general
- **Difficulty #2:** head = physical head here with a metaphorical meaning of being either head as in boss, head as in the most prominent, or (less likely) as in source.
- **Difficulty #3:** Is this hierarchy descriptive, meaning is Paul saying this is how it is in 1<sup>st</sup> century world and he's reminding them of this? Or is it prescriptive, as in, this is the structure/order prescribed for all churches at all times, including today.
  - Good arguments for both sides. Neither are conclusive.

**Either way, we can all see that Paul is saying that structure, order, and a distinction between men and woman, male and female is important.**

So, let's try to summarize that.

>> **FILL-IN: Principle 1: In the church, men and woman are called to maintain PROPER ORDER by honoring God-given GENDER DISTINCTIONS.**

### How was this principle apply at Corinth?

- Remember, the Corinthians lived in a patriarchal culture that had many restrictions for woman. Cf. the Middle East today, or rural India, some places in Asia, etc.
- But, they have been called into God' household where women now have equal spiritual standing in Christ with men! It's radical, it's new:  
Galatians 3:26-28 <sup>26</sup> *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,* <sup>27</sup> *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* <sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. That's massive, it's huge.*
- In Corinth, the church was experiencing this new freedom, this new equality between men and women, **and Paul doesn't shut it down. He doesn't say women, stop praying and prophesying.**
- This is big leap ahead for women in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
  - They get to speak (pray and prophecy) and participate in a public assembly! That's was not true outside of church.
  - They get to be co-laborers with men in doing God's work. That was not true outside of church.
- In new found freedom, it appears that some are throwing off some social conventions in their worship gatherings which **is are causing problems:**
- **When a woman covered** her hair, or bound it up, it sent 2 messages back then:
  - 1) Modesty, I'm a private person, not for your attention.
  - 2) Honor to my husband or father (in that culture a woman was subject to her father until married, then husband)
- **When a woman uncovered** it, or loosed it, it conveyed a mix message. Freedom and equality in Christ. A removal of some distinctions between men and women. Yes, that's good, but also in that social context it potentially conveyed:
  - 1) Sexual immodesty (remember temple of Aphrodite, goddess of sex has a big temple there)
  - 2) Dishonor to their husbands or fathers
- **When a man kept his hair uncovered**, and/or hair short, it communicated his maleness. It honored his God-given gender.
  - If he covered his hair, or wore it long, or wore it long and tied it up, he may be enjoying his freedom in Christ but he's also unintentionally dishonoring Christ by removing the gender distinctions given by our Creator.

**So, God calls them to maintain these social conventions to honor each other, retain gender distinctions, and maintain order in their gatherings.**

<> Now, how does this principle apply here today?

**Principle 1: In the church, men and woman are called to maintain PROPER ORDER by honoring God-given GENDER DISTINCTIONS.**

**QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:**

1) Why are gender distinctions important?

- Because, we are different by design:
  - **Genesis 1:27 God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male he created them.**
  - And our differences are good! They are complimentary:
    - Genesis 2:
      - It's not good for man to be alone.
      - God forms woman from the man
      - They are alike, but different
      - Both bear God's image.
      - And God has made them 2 with the potential to become 1 (1 relational unit; 1 physical unit – sexually, anatomically, male and female are made to fit and potentially bear offspring).

2) How can we honor each other, protect each other's honor?

- 1) Modesty:
  - **ILLUS:** Visiting female worship leader at a former church who was dressed immodestly and unintentionally made it difficult to worship.
- 2) Put off improper behavior:
  - **ILLUS:** The guy at a former church who used to leer at woman and make them uncomfortable.
  - View older women as mothers. View peers and younger woman as sisters with purity.

<> And, to keep them, and us, from going too far in the direction that men and women are COMPLETELY distinct, completely different, and to keep them from going back into a rigid patriarchal hierarchy way of doing things because of v.3, Paul gives them this counterbalance...v.11

>> <sup>11</sup> **Nevertheless, in the Lord** [now that we are in Jesus] **woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.** <sup>12</sup> **For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But** [de = And] **everything comes from God.**

Here's a restatement of that principle considering the larger passage:

>> **FILL-IN: Principle 2:** In the church, men and women are both called to **PARTNER IN BUILDING UP** the church.

- They back then, and we today are called to continue working together, praying together, using their spiritual gifts together to build up the body.
- Together, we build something that is better.
- God calls us to work together, and because of our differences and potential for dishonoring each other or for sexual improprieties, we need to voluntarily limit our freedoms at times. At times we need to lay aside our desires to throw off social conventions for the sake of this greater goal of helping people know and follow Jesus.

Apply it today:

- Men are not better than women and should honor and respect women
- Women are not better than men and should honor and respect men
- WHY because we both bear the image of God
  - We need each other to be fully formed body of Christ
  - OTC: We have men and women on ministry team and board. All roles are open to those who are called and whose call is recognized by the church.

Avoid stereotypes:

- All men should (fill in the blank)
  - Example: know how to trap a bear, fix a gearbox, build a cabin
- If you insist on one way to be a man, you're in danger of two things:
  - 1) Hurting godly men who are manly but don't do things with sports, cars, or the outdoors.
  - 2) Making your particular expression of manhood the standard for everyone else.

Same with women!

- All women should (fill in the blank)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. We are equally valuable! Image bearers of God, purchased by Christ
2. Our differences complement and help each other!
3. Let's work together, in a way that honors each other and our differences, to help people know and follow Jesus.



## **RESPONSE**

>> What is the Lord saying to you today?  
What next step is Jesus calling you to take?