

## Showing Authority and Submission

God has imposed a spiritual order (submission and authority) within the relationships of the Trinity, between God and humans, and between man and the woman. This submission does not reflect the value of one over the other (that is, they are worth more or less) but rather reflects their function within life and ministry. In all of this, God the Father is the authority over Jesus while Jesus is accomplishing the salvation of mankind. One is not better or worse than the other, but for reasons of calling and function, they have this relationship of authority and submission between themselves. Equally the man and the woman have a divinely instituted relationship where the woman is submissive to the man, though equal in value. In Genesis when God created Eve, His purpose was one of making a perfect helpmate (**Gen 2:18, 20**). It is not given to the woman to have dominion over the man but to support him through being submissive and subject to his will as husband and father.

**1Ti 2:11** *Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*

**1Co 14:34** *Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*

The woman should never take authority over a man, because it is not part of the plan of God. There are basically two very special situations that the woman needs to beware of (1) her relations in the home, and (2) in the church.

## Customs of Head Coverings

People have always used hats to cover their heads from the sun, rain, or because of cold. These uses really do not enter into the consideration of our present tract. Even different pagan cultures in the day of Paul had different thinking about how and when and who was to cover their heads. We need to focus on

two special costumes that of the Jews and than in Corinth at the time of Paul's letter.

## The Customs of the Jews

The woman who was a good Jew did not have a whole lot of participation in life outside of the home. She followed the example of the virtuous woman in **Proverbs 31**, and her few excursions from the home were to buy or sell products. She had her face completely covered with two veils (one on the top of the head, and the other across the lower part of the face). According to Joacim Jeremiah, a man could divorce his wife if she went out without these veils.<sup>1</sup> This custom was what they did when they went out in public in general, and not just for a religious service. This custom was a practice that flowed from the concept of modesty that believing women had. They sought to be humble and shamefaced (timid), and show an attitude of not revealing herself or being seen in some way that was shameful or improper. Audacity is the opposite of this biblical "shamefacedness".

**1Ti 2:9** *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;*

Head covering should be seen as a matter of liberty and the personal desire of the woman, and not as an imposition of law or rule over her. The Christian woman is a person who seeks to keep her life in order and not be audacious or shameful. She does not reveal herself because she belongs to Christ, and being a Christian woman, she keeps the intimate of her body only for her husband. Others cannot enjoy her nakedness, or semi-nakedness, and so she never reveals her intimate parts. Even women in general in the images we have of Romans and Greek seem to always have loose togas which reach below the knee.

<sup>1</sup> Joacim Jeremías in *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesús.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) pp 359-360.

## The Principle of Submission

What Paul uses as an explanation for the Corinthians is interesting. The Jews in themselves did not see a spiritual principle involved in using or not using a head covering in their services. The only principle that they saw was modesty and shamefacedness that every woman should show. But Paul saw this matter in question as one of authority and of submission of one to another. Even though few people are really able to see within the family and home of a couple to verify if the woman is truly submissive and really obeys her husband, the point of covering the head revolves around this issue of showing submission to authority. It is important to see that the idea of covering the head for the woman came from a desire to show her submission to her man in a public form. This is still a valid point today.

## What was Shameful for the Woman?

**1Co 11:6** *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.*

Paul made the point that it is shameful for the Christian woman if she does not cover her head. Paul also proposes that it is the same as going about shorn as it is to have short hair. Either of the two is shameful for the woman, and should be seen as immodest or audacious, and Christian women don't do these things.

**1Co 11:15** *But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

What should be clear is that the veil is a modesty help **that the Christian woman uses when her hair is cut short.** A woman may cut or lose her hair, for example in a vow, and then they would use a veil. This is the same principle. What Paul commanded is that the woman should wear her hair long, and for whatever reason if she cannot, then she should use a veil. If we understand this principle, then we understand that the veil is mandatory (for

keeping her modesty) when she is shaved or has short hair (her hair is growing out). **What is short?** Well, this is a difficulty to get into exact definitions, but if we just put the question to the general public without explaining much, in general most will see “long hair” as passing the neck, and short hair is close cut to the head.

### What is shameful for the man?

**1Co 11:14** *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?*  
**15** *But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*  
According to Paul, “nature” teaches us that it is a shame and “dishonoring” for a man to have long hair, and it is the glory for a woman to have long hair.

### The Corinthian Situation

**1Co 11:16** *But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

When we examine this passage, we find a particular teaching of the Corinthian church. They asked Paul about this, and his reply is an explanation why SOME Christians use veils and long hair, with a clarification of the official position of God on the matter.

The situation in Corinth has to do with the cult of Aphroditus, the goddess of love, and her temple in Corinth. In an historical mention, it had at one time 1000 women priestesses which practiced the worship of Aphroditus. How did they worship? By nakedness and free sex with men who came to the temple. These were for lack of a better word prostitutes, and decent women in Corinth who were in no way associated or participating in that but were submissive under their husbands would mark themselves with a veil so as to not be confused with these priestesses. Every evening, the temple sounded a cymbal that announced the beginning of this sexual worship orgy. The priestesses would leave the temple going into

the city seeking men with which to “worship.” This happened every afternoon, and Corinth was a place of many soldiers and sailors, which were notorious for taking advantage of such a situation, so then a general confusion would take place of men taking these women. Good women not participating in this “worship” would use a veil to keep themselves from being raped. This situation was distinct to Corinth, but was overlaid on the general customs of decent women not revealing their bodies, but covering themselves well. Since decent Corinthian Christian women always wore veils, they looked with affront other Christian women who did not.

Paul clearly says that neither the group that traveled with Paul, nor “the churches of God” had this costume. In other words, it was an obligation that nobody insisted on as far as Paul knew. This custom was the desire and actual manifestation of Christian women which showed modesty and shamefacedness in their personal lives. The obligation was modesty and shamefacedness, not veils and long hair. As far as how modesty and shamefacedness is actually shown today, that is a question which is only answered personally, by each individual in their culture and context. Paul freed them from a specific practice, and perhaps if they followed these customs, they did well. The point is not to impose or excuse conduct, but that each person individually asks herself, how should I show my submission to God? How should I arrange my body to show modesty and shamefacedness? Today some would take this passage as not having anything to do with us, and others would make a direct commandment out of it to use a head covering. Others would say that long hair is sufficient, and others insist on a hat of some kind during services and others all the time. Others see the principle, but reject veils and prefer hats. But modesty and submission should be what is communicated.

# Submission and Covering the Head

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**1 Corinthians 11:3-16** *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying,*

*having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 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. 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. 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. 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 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 of 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 is 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.*