

Doing Church, Pt. 1

*The Living Gospel Pt 12 | 1 Corinthians 11
May 27, 2017 – Spence Shelton*

Good Morning Mercy Church! Happy Memorial Day Weekend. One thing I've come to learn as I meet and interact with military families is that when one person in the family is in military service, the whole family is in the service. The whole family sacrifices. So thank you.

Today I need to begin our time doing a little survey with you all. Don't worry, just a show of hands kind of thing.

1. How many of you grew up going to church on a somewhat regular basis? Your parents or whoever took you along with them. That kind of thing.

Not surprising, a great deal of Americans grew up going to church. For some, the faith of their parents became their own & for others they left it at home when they grew up.

2. Next Question: How many of you think the bible is God's word?
3. Last Question: How many think that obeying God's instructions is good for us as a church and to disobey God's word would somehow be bad for us as a church?

Ok good. Now, Let me read today's passage to you. 1
Corinthians 11.2-16

2 Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. **3** But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. **4** Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, **5** but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. **6** For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. **7** For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. **8** For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. **9** Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. **10** That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. **11** Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; **12** for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. **13** Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? **14** Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, **15** but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. **16** If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

Does anyone want to change their survey answers? Some passages are hard because they are hard to understand. Some because they are just hard to swallow. This one is both.

But I believe if we will lock in, what awaits us is critical, beautiful truth from God for us today. My goal today is to get to a place where you see the beautiful design God gave manhood & womanhood. I want us to understand it, celebrate it and then talk about how we exalt God's design in a world incredibly confused about manhood & womanhood right now. I believe today's passage has a uniquely prophetic message into our day. I think there is a window we are in where this message on manhood & womanhood can serve as a window into the glory of God for a confused world.

Today we are turning down the home stretch in our study of 1st Corinthians. Paul is going to spend chapters 11-14 talking about how we "do church" and he's going to give a lot of attention to the corporate worship gathering. Which should tell you how important the worship gathering of the church is to God. And this is where he starts. This stuff about head coverings. So here's how we are going to approach this. I'm going to just walk through this passage. And I'm going to organize the walk through like this¹:

¹ I am borrowing this structure from Pastor David Sunday who put this structure together 7 years ago in a great sermon titled "[Honoring God as Men and Women.](#)"

1. A Principle on manhood & womanhood that Paul is giving to the church
2. The Violation of that principle
3. Where the principle comes from
4. How we apply this principle in our day

1. The Principle: Men and women are created equal, yet distinct (v.3).

He begins with the idea that everyone has a head. Now I imagine that is pretty obvious. In fact if you are a note taker go ahead and write that down. **Everyone has a head.** But look, it's actually crucially important. Headship is actually a huge deal for understanding manhood & womanhood.

3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

I know this verse is unbelievably controversial. Type "the head of a wife is her husband" into Google and Google will say "are you serious?" I know this is something that makes some skeptics think "this is why I can never believe the bible. It's so antiquated." I know. Just hang with me and then make a judgment call towards the end. Just follow the line of thought here in verse 3. Everyone has a head. Or, everyone is under the authority of someone else.

Keep verse 3 up until I say put it down or go to next one

Every man is under the headship of Christ. Eph 1 – Christ is

the HEAD of the church. Eph 4 - We grow up into the head of Christ. He is the Lord, he is the authority of EVERYONE in the church both men and women. But uniquely he has positioned himself as the head of man. A lot we will see today is true for the Christian family unit and for the church. So the head of the church is Christ also.

Then Paul says the head of a WIFE is her husband. Paul teaches this in Ephesians 5.22-24: [22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

I've been in weddings where they read Ephesians 5 because it is so beautiful but skip this part because you know, that's not cool. But Paul is saying the head of a wife is her husband. In some way she is under his authority & is to submit to him.

Then he says hey don't forget this: **The head of Christ is God.**

1 Cor 3.23 -[23] and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Paul is connecting our submission to authority back to our understanding of the nature of God. We believe in God as a Trinity; which means one God in three persons. Now this is important: the three persons in the trinity are all equally God. Yet they have distinctive roles they play.

- 1 Cor 15 – The son himself will also be subjected to the father. The son equal in value is submitting himself to the father because of the role he has.

I think even the word order here in verse 3 is crucial. If we only focus on man's headship over woman, we might think we could leave thinking man is superior to woman. Which can lead to terrible abuse & has in some settings...To ensure there is NO WAY we can think man is somehow superior to woman...he says Christ himself has a head. He submits to God.

Whatever this verse means, we know it CANNOT mean that man is in any way superior to the woman. There is no hint of inferiority of women in this passage because The son is not inferior to the father. He is in glad submission to the father because that is his role, but they are fully equal in their work in creating & redeeming the universe.

Now why does this idea that everyone has a head matter? This principle gets straight to the heart of the gospel message itself:

Think if the son did not submit to the father? He said not my will but yours be done. What if instead he said not your will but mine...and he runs away from the cross...We are left to die in our sins. Not only that, there is chaos in the Godhead and the universe implodes. It's impossible! Get this: The death of Christ on the cross was an act of Submission by a person who was equal in value to the one

he was submitting to. **The gospel is the greatest act of submission EVER.**

What if *you* do not submit to Christ? Then you don't have salvation from your sins. This often gets downplayed but the only way to obtain the salvation God offers you from your sin is to submit your whole life to Christ. C.S. Lewis said conversion isn't a guilty person saying I'm sorry; it's a rebel soldier surrendering his arms at the feet of his new king.

What about in a family? What if a wife does not then submit to the headship of her husband? Will there be any consequences to that? It seems there would have to be. If we do not joyfully and willingly submit to the headship God has placed over us we tell a lie about who God is and in some way compromise our message to the world. Husbands...let me turn this back to you: can you expect or ask for your wife's submission to you when you are not submitting yourself to Christ? Would that not be hypocrisy?

GET THIS: Especially you who have never heard what the bible actually says about gender identity. The bible's teaching on gender BEGINS with the teaching that both genders are equal in value and both genders are to submit to an authority over them. And God is not asking anyone, man or woman, to do something he has not already done!

This submission to our head is to be reflected by all believers in our worship together. That gets into the next

verses... Let's keep going in verses 4 – 6 we are going to see

2. The rejection of headship

4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, **5** but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. **6** For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head

Ok, head coverings. What is this saying? There are AMPLE interpretations on this. What is at the heart of it? What is clear is that head coverings symbolized SOMETHING in 1st century Corinth. And we must understand the message behind the symbol. We would reduce the power of this passage if we just said ok...women must wear head coverings & men cannot. So starting next week greeters will transform into head monitors. Men's hats will be confiscated and women will be given head scarves along with those pens you get on the way in. I want to show you the cultural thing going on:

In Middle Eastern culture, hair was a common object of lust. Like a bathing suit today. Weird, yes. Woman who keeps herself covered around men other than her husband is honoring him.

It was also seen as a sign of submission. By wearing a head covering she was indicating she submitted to her husband's authority. And some think the reason Paul puts it *here* is that it was a common practice, in that day, for a woman

(married or single) to wear it in the corporate worship gathering was to also show submission to the male elders of the church.

Now The reason this has come up: Remember this is metropolitan Corinth. Bunch of young people free from the trappings of their parents. And now as Christians they learn they are free in Christ! Not bound to law! So I'll do what I want to do!

So, you've got a free society where anything goes; you've got a religion now that teaches you are free from the law. Mix those two together. Do you see how this can lead to confusion?

That's exactly where the Corinthian church was. They had misunderstood freedom and started to apply it to places it did not belong. For example, 1 Cor 5, they applied it to alternative lifestyles. In 1 Cor 6, they applied it to free sex. In chapter 7, to divorce. **In chapter 11, they've applied it to gender roles.**

It's understandable. Christianity held a revolutionary view of gender because it said that both male and female were equal in value. No major religion or philosophy held that view. Paul is saying Christian freedom is not freedom to just do whatever you want to do; it is empowerment to live how God intended for you to live all along.

Paul says Gender Identity Matters a great deal! God's glory is at stake in how you embrace your gender & use it to declare his glory!

Some women were rejecting the role God had given them and expressing that rejection by praying & prophesying in service with their head uncovered. (BTW: we'll come back in application but he isn't saying women shouldn't pray & prophesy in the worship service. In fact he's assuming they WILL. And they should! So he's talking about how they do this in a way that brings glory to God.) But Paul says to reject your role by uncovering your head, she might as well cut all her hair off since she is trying to act like a man. That's his sarcasm though. He's rebuking the way they've thrown aside femininity under the banner of freedom in Christ.

So Paul says when praying if a man covers his head (v4) he dishonors his actual head & spiritual head because he'd be appearing to play the role of woman. And if a woman uncovered her head she dishonored her actual head & her spiritual head – God because she'd be appearing to play the role of a man. Instead of embracing the God glorifying role that God had given her. **THE POINT...IS THE DISTORTION OF THE LIVING GOSPEL PICTURE THAT WAS TO BE THE CHURCH!**

So should women wear head coverings to church today? That seems to be more of a cultural application of this principle than the principle itself. For example: Scripture says we are to greet each other with a holy kiss. I don't see the greeting team doing that. Likewise verse 10 where he says it is a "symbol" helps to say this was a culturally appropriate application of the principle. The principle is what we've just said: We've got to practice leadership and

submission in our homes and in the church body in a way that gives glory & honor to God!

But then Paul moves into talking about creation:

3. The foundation of headship: Creation

7 For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

Paul is connecting head coverings to creation. So let's go there real quick

Ge2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it....

God creates man first. God gives him a job to do...to work the garden. Mankind was created to work. So he was holding down a job. My old pastor used to say ladies, before God gave him a woman, he gave him a job. So if he doesn't have a job or isn't a good student, he isn't ready for a woman. But then he creates woman saying...

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place

with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Helper, "*edzer kenegdo*." Word means similar, though different. Complements, completes him. Ancient Jewish rabbis used to point out God did not take woman from his head, to rule over him or from foot to be his slave but from his side. As Paul says in **1 Cor 11:8, Woman was made from man & for man**. The Hebrew word for man is *ish*, the word for woman is *ishah*; means "man-ette." From then on in the Bible, "man" or "mankind" is the one word that signifies both.²

God made both of them in his image. That's genesis 1. And now he has created these two distinct beings made to reflect his image in different ways. And he called that image "very good." And Paul is pulling on that creation image and saying there is a way in which manhood and womanhood both exalt the glory of God in unique and beautiful ways!

Paul's teaching is about ROLES not values. So when a woman says, "I don't want to be the helper." God is called the Helper in Exodus and the Holy Spirit is called the Helper in the New Testament. Women are to submit like Jesus did. If it's not too good for Jesus, it's not for you either!

² This commentary on Genesis comes from J.D. Greear's sermon on 1 Cor 11 titled "Men, Women, & the Kingdom of God" preached in 2007.

Gender Identity is a hot topic right now in our culture. Peter Kreeft puts two mainstream views on gender in the camp of Chauvinists & Feminists. He says both the Chauvinist and the Feminist accept the same flawed argument. If men and women are different, then one must be superior. The Chauvinist says, "Men and women are different, so men are superior." The feminist says, "Men and women are different, and women are superior," or, they say, "Men and women are not different, it is only cultural conditioning." But the premise is flawed: men and women are the same in essence, but different in their roles.³ **Same in essence, different in roles.** In a very confused world that needs to ring deep and true to us in the church. Then out of left field, Paul brings up angels.

10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

What? Seems like a cop out when I don't know what to say to my kids. "Go clean your room" "why?" "Because of the angels!" Again tough to know for sure but what may be happening is he's saying even the angels submit themselves to God. Demons want to be in charge and overthrow God. "Don't be a demon." Everyone has a head. So the wife ought to play her role just as every created being does. And just in case someone tried to abuse this he reinforces the same in essence, different in roles message:

³ Peter Kreeft, "Why Only Men can be Daddies." MP3 talk, www.peterkreeft.com.

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; **12** for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

Like the Godhead, man and woman in marriage are interdependent. And like the Godhead, men and women in the church depend on one another. In fact we can't be born without women. This is God's design.

Let me read you the next couple of verses because they begin to work towards application how do we apply this teaching to our churches today?

13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? **14** Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, **15** but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

Now is he saying Guys need crew cuts only? I don't think so. I think he is calling men to embrace manhood, then look and act like men and for women to embrace womanhood and then look and act like women. Well you say hasn't Paul ever seen a picture of Jesus? Listen, the image of Jesus as a skinny white dude with long rick flair hair & a miss America sash...That is absolutely ridiculous. The guy was a Jewish Carpenter. You ever seen a carpenter with a hair straightener on his tool belt? I don't think so.

The point is: **The church is called to embrace biblical manhood & womanhood in a way that is biblically faithful and culturally aware.** So what does that mean for us? *(I think your community group should really dig some on this.)*

This is what all good missionaries do. Figure out what the common cultural expressions are for manhood & womanhood and step into those expressions & speak gospel truth.

Culture says: Gender is fluid & is for me to determine.
God says: I created male & female in my image. & I celebrate their differences & how they teach the world about me.

Culture says: Beauty is in your body appearance.

God says: Beauty is the way you exalt God's image through your faithfulness to the role he's made for you

Culture says: gender shouldn't be confined to stereotypes
God agrees! And instead gives us a beautiful story of redemption where we get to play roles we were made to play for his glory.

Paul really seems to be saying men look like men & carry yourself like a man; women look like women and carry yourself like a woman. But the point is to create gender clarity for the purpose of exalting the glory of God.

In Christian churches and Christian homes, men play the role of Christ-like leader; women play the role of God-like Helper

1. Men, you need to lead!

First in the home. You cannot disengage and let your wife bring up your children. You are to be the leader. The one who leads in such a sacrificial way that your wife feels empowered to help you. The roles, when played out, create a beautiful picture of Christ and the church. When you get into a stalemate you have to decide...and your decision is based around what is best for her and your family. Die to self for their sake. God has given me a couple of life passions and one is that men would step into the God-glorifying picture of biblical manhood. I learned this definition of biblical manhood from Robert Lewis. **A biblical man is one who rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, and leads courageously.** This needs to be you in your home. Write this one down. Go home and say: Am I being a man like Adam or like Christ? Adam was a passive coward who blame shifted. Christ was courageous and took our place. I hope you see this single men: That doesn't require waiting until marriage. In fact if you wait until marriage to act like a man that will be harmful to your marriage.

Second you need to lead in the church!

About 90 percent of the boys reared in church abandon it during their teens and twenties. Most never return. 1 out of 5 married women worship alone without their husbands.

We need a church culture where men lead. We are a young church. There are ample opportunities for you to step out, sacrifice yourself for the sake of others, & lead our church.

Lead ministry teams & community groups. Step out and make some disciples. Eric Metaxas in the intro to his book *7 Men* says the one thing the rising generation desperately needs...is heroes. Men they can look up to and aspire to be like. That's who the men of Mercy Church need to be! There is a toxic rejection of commitment among men in our culture and it is seeping into the church. So men won't commit to a team they'll just "help out where they can when they can." That is passivity and it has got to go. Not because we need ministry team members but because the fact that nobody can depend on you is a sign of poor passive character. Reject that passivity men! Commit yourself! Surrender that autonomy and accept some responsibility around the Mercy Family. BTW – I will say I love that some of the biggest influences on my sons right now are men serving in our kids' ministry.

Women, you step up and help! First in the home. Wife you allowing him the space to lead? He's a sinner so he will screw this up sometimes ok. But his God given role is to lead & to take responsibility before God for his family. Which means sometimes its Like Tony Evans says, "Spiritual headship is God telling the woman to duck so He can punch the man." How can you create that space for him and encourage him in his God given role?

Second you step up and help in the church! Women in our church are serving at every level of leadership except for elder and I am so grateful. I'm praying for more of that. I want to see more women praying & exhorting in our

gathering like Paul talked about and we are going to continue to ask you to step into that role during our worship gatherings. You may reply "wait, doesn't Paul say just a few chapters later in 14 that women are to be silent?" Do the scriptures contradict themselves? NO! The command for women to be silent in chapter 14 is not an absolute prohibition of all speech by women. Rather, it is prohibiting a type of speaking that would usurp or reject the authority God has established in the church. Tom Schriener says yes women should be given the space to pray & speak in church but to do so in a demeanor that respects the spiritual authority God has given to the men who are elders in the church.

Functionally this is why elders carry out the ministry of teaching God's word. To embrace & model this God-given role. But then it is good for our souls to have men and women pray, sing, & exhort from God's word testifying to his faithfulness together. And we will continue to pursue that together.

16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

I love how Paul finishes. Some will be contentious. But in the churches of God...everyone has a head. This isn't confusing. Wives submit to their husband's headship and husbands submit to Christ's headship. And God has called everyone to submit to male leadership in the church. This is what the churches of God do. There are two kinds of

churches. Churches of culture and churches of God.
Churches of culture determine their theology by the
prevailing winds of what culture deems acceptable.
Churches of God hold firm to the word of God come what
may. And so we will exalt the glory of God in the roles he
has given men and women to play.