

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

“God Ordained Order”

You know there are various topics in the Word of God that can be tough to teach on. Sometimes because the nature of the subject matter can simply be awkward to expound on in a public environment; other times because the nature of the subject matter tends to step on toes and fly in the face of the spirit of the day and age in which we live.

Yet we realize that God’s Word transcends time, it’s not bound by culture, and we understand that the problem when it comes to such things isn’t that God’s Word is outdated, it’s that we’ve strayed as a people from the principles and precepts of the Word of God that are to guide and govern our lives. and Rather than simply acknowledge that, fall on our faces and repent of that, we like to tout the Word of God as being ancient and outdated, culturally irrelevant, spoken to a different people at a different time. But here’s the deal, times may change, culture may alter throughout the years, but human nature remains the same. and God’s Word speaks to the human heart, and not only does the heart of man remain the same throughout the ages, but God’s heart *towards* man stays the same as well. Not being willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, and in coming to Christ God has established some things, various principles and precepts that He has ordained to bring structure to our relationship with Him and with one another.

God has *ordained* order, and really *nothing* operates successfully apart from order. A military unit operates under order, and a factory has a C.E.O., management staff, floor supervisors, team leaders and all the rest. A school system has an administrative team, various board members, of course the faculty, or teaching staff. Even the human body; your immune system gets out of order, there’s a real problem. Your heart, or your kidneys start functioning out of order, it’s not going to be good. and God has ordained that as the body of Christ, be it in the church corporately, or in our homes personally we should follow suit (orderliness). We serve a God of order, and as such He desires a *sense* of order in our service to Him, and there are certain guidelines that He’s laid out in His Word that we’re *all* (as believers) to submit to.

So this is one of those studies that tends to fly in the face of the spirit of the day and age in which we live. But we’re not going to shy away from it, we’re just going boldly declare it and let the chips fall where they may. But before we get delving too deeply into that (getting the cart before the horse) we want to jump right in to Vs 1 here where Paul the apostle boldly declares.

Vs1

Now you guys understand that when it come to the various Ch breaks and Vs references in the Word of God that in and of themselves, *they’re not* inspired. In other words someone came along a # of years ago and in order to make it easier for us to find various places in the scriptures they cataloged it (so to speak) by adding verse numbers and Ch breaks. and Because of that we have a tendency to think that with each Ch break is a turn of the topic, or it’s where a particular subject matter comes to an end. and At times such is the case, and there’s debate whether such is the case here. Did Paul say this in order to round out what he’s just been saying regarding, “let no one seek his own, but each one the others well being?” Or is he saying this as a spear head touching on the topic of submitting to God’s ordained order for the church and for the home?

I personally think he's in reference to what he's been saying in Ch 10, kind of bringing closure to what a life led for Christ looks like in considering others above myself. and In Vs 32 he speaks of how he seeks not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Then he makes this statement, (Read Vs 1 Ch 11). and Of course Christ was the ultimate example in giving Himself away for the benefit of others, that they may be saved. **But in reality it's sort of a debate in vain because it really doesn't matter which way Paul was pointing with this, he was an example in both arenas (as was Christ). and The statement really stands alone and looks to include basically every arena of the Christian life.** and Paul, *knowing* that he was following Christ, didn't hesitate to tell other believers to follow after his example. He told the Philippians, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*" Phil 3:17 He exhorted young Timothy, "*...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*" 1 Tim 4:12

He knew that as believers we need examples, people who will demonstrate with their lives what it means to lead a Christ-like life in the world. and He not only exhorted others in that way but was willing himself to be that example. How often today we hear, "Don't look at me, look at Jesus." and It's true that we all need to look to Jesus, but it's equally true that as people look at us they should be seeing Jesus in us. We've all heard it before, there are people who may never pick up a bible, but the fact is they'll read *your* life, or *my* life from cover to cover. The question is what do they see, can they find Christ in our lives? I wonder how many of us would be willing, that should someone say, "What does it really mean to follow Jesus today?" That we would say, "Hey, you know what? Just follow me around, and I'll show you." **Not in a prideful "I'm all that" kinda way, but just in humility, "I look to lead my life set apart to Jesus Christ both publicly and personally, imitate me."** Paul was that guy, and of course he realized that it wasn't him in and of himself that was the example, he had an example to...Jesus Christ He sought to imitate Him, to follow Him, that is lead his life and Christ led His.

and Really this is a conditional clause, he doesn't say, "Imitate me, in everyway and in everything." But rather he says, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ." Which is to say, "I'm striving to lead my life in a manner that's befitting to the person of Christ, but I realize I'm not going to hit it perfect every time, don't imitate me in the areas that I come up short. Imitate me so much as you see me following Christ." **He understood he wasn't the fullness of all that Christ desired, but he was willing to lay his life aside for the sake of others and be that instrument to whom people could look to and follow after should they desire to want to know the way that a life consecrated to Christ interacted with others and pursued the heart of God.** What it means to be, "in the world, but not of the world." and How we need those men, and those women today who'll just say, "God hear I am, take my life, and make of my life whatever you desire, that I might imitate You Jesus, that others might look to You, and see You in my life."

Vs2

As we've noted before it's fairly typical of the apostle to give a word of commendation before he gives a word of exhortation. We seen him do this in Ch 1 and we find it again here, perhaps because there was so much exhortation he felt compelled to give them another commendation just to reinsure to them that he was on their side, for them and not against them.

It's always a good rule of thumb to try and remember, if you've got something you need to share with someone that has the potential to be a sensitive subject. It's just not a bad idea to let them know some things you appreciate about them before you begin to speak about a potential problem with them. *If I know someone is for me, and really not against me, but they're just trying to look out for me, be a help to me, I'm much more willing to be open and receptive to what they have to say. But if I feel like they're just coming at me with both barrels blasting, what happens?*

The walls of defense come up immediately, and after you're done land blasting me I'm going to share a couple of things I think *you* need to work on. So Paul reminds them here again that he's really on their side, he's glad that they bear in mind who he is *to* them, the things he's shared *with* them.

When it speaks here of the "traditions," he's not speaking of the traditions of man which the bible makes clear can ensnare us if we're not careful. "We can't do it any other way because we've always done it *this* way. It's *tradition*." That's not what Paul is talking about, that's how we become old wine skins that rip and tear, rupture and burst when God wants to do a new work. We always want to remain flexible and willing to yield to a wind of change brought on by the Holy Spirit. What he's speaking of here are simply the practices, and teachings of the apostles that they'd received from Christ. He's not speaking of certain religious ceremonies, but rather basic biblical doctrine as given to them, having been received from the Lord. (Now for the exhortation)

Vs3

Now you're beginning to understand what I meant in the beginning when I was talking about touchy topics we encounter. Because Paul is going to spend a little bit of time here speaking on the proper (God ordained) order of the church and home. and He's going to deal primarily with the role of ladies because of an apparent breach of the godly order there in the Church at Corinth.

and with this Vs he lays the basic ground work for the rest of the Ch and really on up through the end of Ch 14 making it clear that God has established principles of order, authority and accountability that we need to abide *by* and submit *to*. and Of course the key word in Vs 3 is the word, "head." *Because apart from understanding the implication behind that word we don't get the proper understanding of everything else he has to say regarding it. If I misunderstand the instructions when I'm trying to put together something for one of my kids on Christmas morning, the whole thing is going to be messed up.* So to when it comes to God's Word, if we misunderstand the instructions, the objectives of our lives will be amiss. We've spoken before of how what we believe determines how we behave, the way I *learn* determines how I *live*. So we want to know, what does Paul mean when he says, "The head of every man in Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

What is the head? Well put quite simply the head is that which gives direction *to* my body, and is thereby in a position of authority *over* my body. My body takes direction from the desires of my head, so when the bible speaks of us being the *body* of Christ, it speaks of Jesus being the Head because He's the one who give direction *to* us and is in a position of authority *over* us.

Some want to argue and say, “No, it means the ‘source’ as in the head of a river is the source or the origin of the river” But we reject that, why? Because God wasn’t the source through whom Christ came as though Christ came through Him being as it were created *by* Him. The bible is clear, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*” John 1:1-3 So Christ couldn’t have come *through* God as though He was made *by* God because with out Him *nothing* was made that was made. He is the eternal 2nd person of the triune God-Head. So put simply we’re speaking of established positions of authority, and when I have an authority it’s only right that I submit to them accordingly. Because I *realize* that along with the authority is a matching accountability.

Now, he points out 3, “headship” relationships, and in connecting the 3 he’s establishing the fact that the principles of headship apply equally in all 3. and He says that the head of *every* man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Now there are a few of things that we want to establish here real quick. #1 He says that the head of *every* man is Christ. In other words it’s right and proper that Jesus Christ be the authority over every man. and Certainly the bible teaches that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father, but unfortunately not every man will recognize the headship of Jesus Christ of their own accord, though ultimately it will be acknowledged by all. But I want you to notice that what he *doesn’t* say here is that the head of *every* woman is *every* man. The bible doesn’t teach that. God has ordained male headship in 2 institutions, the church and the home. Outside of that, the idea of male headship doesn’t carry over, be it in the corporate world, politics or whatever. But with in the confines of the church, and of the home God has established the man as the head of those 2 areas under Christ. and We read here that the head of Christ is God. That is, God the Father, God the Father has rightful authority over God the Son. Remember Jesus said, “*For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*” John 6:38 and Again, “*...I always do those things that please Him.*” John 8:29

So ladies you have a couple of different examples here as to what attitude you take towards your head be it in the home or in the church. 1st of all there’s the example of man coming under the rightful authority of Christ. How do most men respond to the authority of Christ, “O Jesus I just want to submit to you all day long.” Not generally, most generally the submission of man to Jesus is something that has to be won over, and we come under Christ often times by the means of the bit and the bridle kicking and screaming all the way. The general attitude of mankind towards Christ is one of rebellion, and it’s a fight all the way to get us to that place whereby we’re willing and wanting to submit our lives to Christ. That’s one way you could approach it. The other way is by the example that Christ gives in *His* submission to the rightful authority of the Father in His life, which is done in loving voluntary surrender as an equal.

You see, let’s get one thing out of the way right now, the idea of *authority* in no way implies *inferiority* on the behalf of the one under that authority. The bible is very clear that Jesus is in all ways equal to the Father, yet lovingly submits to His will.

Nor is there a connotation regarding a lesser quality, you may have captain in the military who is over a private, but isn't near the quality of the man the private is. We're speaking here about simple structure, and the God ordained order of authority. That's the principle at hand, as for how it begins to play out in the church Paul continues.

Vs4-6

Now what Paul is getting at here is the proper order of a church service given the structure that God has established in Vs 3. and Notice he's not saying that women can't pray in the church, or prophesy when the time is appropriate. But he's saying that it's essential that when she do it that she do so under the proper authority of the head, the *head covering* being the cultural symbol of being under that authority. See you have to understand that to those to whom Paul is writing, as well as in many other ancient cultures, the head covering carried about the idea of being under the authority and protection of another. and Don't think of a veil like you might see in Islamic countries today, we're not talking about a face covering. But more like a shawl or something that would be pulled up over their head sort of like a hood, or a scarf. and The particulars of things that have illustrated submission to proper authority have differed throughout the years in various cultures. Paul is going to let us know that it's not the *particulars* of the symbols that he's concerned about so much as the *principle* of proper authority and submission that needs to be respected and upheld.

So if in ancient Corinth you were a woman and you went out in public with your head covered, what that meant is that you were under the authority and protection of another. (Perhaps your husband, or your father, whatever) If you went out in public *with out* your head covered *that meant* you were a prostitute, with out authority and were up for sale. and Often times the prostitutes would shave their heads, in ancient Jewish communities a shaved head on a woman meant she was an adulterous. Either way, there was no *positive* connotation to having your head uncovered, or your head shaved, or your hair cut short if you were a woman at this time.

Now we've discussed how the Corinthians had this phrase, "All things are lawful for me." We've seen it a few times already, and it would seem that some women apparently took that to the extent of, "Hey, we're equal in Christ, so I'm not going to worry about this whole 'head covering' thing, it's not my identity in Christ so I'm not going to bother with it." and Paul says, "Hold the train," if you go so far as to eliminate your head covering. You're sending the signal that A.) You're not respectfully under proper authority, and B.) You're taking on the appearance of potential prostitution *both* of which is a radical dishonoring to your head (your husband, or the church leadership). But that's why he says in Vs 6, "Hey, if you're not going to where a head covering, if you're not going to recognize the God ordained establishment of authority, than just go ahead and shave your head." In other words, "If you're going to rebel... in for a penny, in for a pound," but if it's shameful for you to shave your head, than don't uncover your head, wear the covering. He's seeking to show them the rebellious nature of what they're doing as opposed to the submissive nature that God desires from *all* of us.

Now in Vs 4 if a man were to cover his head while praying, or prophesying (leading a church service) that would be dishonoring to *his* head (Jesus Christ) why, because he's in essence saying, "I'm under the authority of another," when in reality his head is Jesus Christ

Now why is it this way, why is it that Paul writes and says that in the church and in the home men are to be in the position of authority over the women as it pertains to leadership? Well, some people would have you believe that Paul wrote this because he was a male chauvinist pig. But we live today in a much more enlightened age so we can forget about all that. Others would say, "No, it's because women were educated in that day, couldn't go to seminary or anything, but today women can go to school, get equipped in seminary for the work of the ministry so it's not a problem." Still others would default to Corinthian culture, that's where *they* were at, it's not where *we're* at so we don't need to observe this.

I'm not sure why people don't just take what Paul says about *why* he says it. He tells us real plain, and though the particulars may be cultural (head coverings) but the principle is not. Now he's already given us one reason why, Vs 3, God has established the principle of male headship in the home and in the church, period. But he'll explain even more, notice

Vs7-10

So why is it to be this way? To put it quite plainly Paul says in Vs 7 that man is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Or to put it another way, the simple order of creation. The woman wasn't created 1st, but the man was, and the man wasn't taken from the woman, but the woman was taken from the man. That was God's order of creation, #2 nor was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. God made Adam a helper comparable to *him*, He didn't make Eve a helper comparable to *her*. and God didn't bring Adam to Eve, but He brought Eve to Adam and caused him to be responsible and accountable for her.

That's why the bible accredits the fall to Adam rather than to Eve even though she was the one who initially sinned. Because along with authority comes matching accountability. So understand guys that you haven't been called to take a position of authority in your home, it's yours. and You're either a good leader, or you're a bad leader, but as far as God is concerned you're the head of your home.

But Adam had a need for Eve, she completed him, added strength where he was lacking. The woman is the glory of man, "Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." The bible says, "*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,*" Prov 12:4 You see ladies God didn't create the man to come along and support your vision, your agenda (though obviously we love and support one another, He's to love you as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, don't miss understand me here) but God *did* create the woman to come alongside and support his vision and his agenda. That's why it's so critical that you be convinced of God that He is leading you in whomever you choose to marry. Because if you can't find it in your heart to submit to him as for the glory of God, to support him in his vision and agenda, you shouldn't marry him. Don't marry a man you can't come under as your head. **Because you were created to complete him, to be a helper comparable to him, which tells us something else; the principle of the man being the head of the home is something that was present before the fall and God still feels the same way even in relationship to the fall. Don't think it's this way because of the curse, God originated this structure from creation and continues to honor and establish it after the fall. (Vs 10)**

What in the world does that mean? I'm not sure anyone knows emphatically, but this much we do know. As we gather to worship God and study His Word, angelic hosts are present among us. and We know that as the seraphim are in the presence of God, with 2 wings they fly, with 2 they cover their face and with 2 they cover their feet and they cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." **They cover themselves in submission to His holiness, and the thought is that perhaps they're offended at the insubordination, or non-compliance with God's order in a given situation. We know that God is teaching the angels eternal concepts through the church (Eph 3:9-11, 1 Cor 4:9, 1 Pet 1:12). There are bigger things going on here than just you and me, pretty radical isn't it?** But the point is that God has ordained an established order of authority in the home and in the church and we do well not to violate that. Now again we're not reading that every woman is under the authority of every man in the church, we're speaking being under the head, that is the pastor, ruling elders, but it's not an every man over every woman situation.

Vs11-12

So Paul strikes the balance here, he recognizes that although God has established a certain structure. It doesn't give way to men "lording over" women, there's a mutual dependency there as well. **Men and women need each other.** Believe me ladies I would never seek to take away from the vital importance that you play in the body of Christ, if the ladies here were to suddenly stop serving, this ministry would come to a grinding halt. We are not independent of one another. and The man who doesn't recognize that better not get married, or look to lead in the body of Christ.

Vs13-16

Real quick, the idea is that it's even natural for women to have some sort of covering through longer hair than men. and Obviously there's a couple things we should point out. When he says that nature teaches that it's a shame for a man to have long hair, it doesn't say that that's what God teaches, it says that's what nature teaches. and Nature doesn't teach that it's sin, but that it's shame. Now you may recall that God *commanded* in the vow of the Nazirite that he *wasn't* to get his hair cut.

Paul took such a vow and apparently had long hair for awhile, and then he shaved his head at the end of the vow at which point they burn their hair to God as an offering on the altar (Acts 18:8). **So he's not talking about matters of sin here, but matters of cultural shame. In other words he's saying that it's not sin for a woman to go around with out her head covered. But in Corinth it was a radical shame and it dishonored her head. However if you're in a place that doesn't recognize that as a symbol of submission, don't worry about it.**

Here in America it's not a cultural taboo, if you go somewhere where it's disrespectful not to have a head covering, wear one. When I went to Africa I removed my earrings, it was a weird stigma to them. **They had a hard time as seeing as anything but pagan, so we removed our earrings or any other piercings the group may've had. So the particulars of head coverings, or length of hair (be it for guys, or short hair for girls) isn't the custom of the church of God. But the principle of established order as ordained by God, is. and That we're to honor.**

Prayer Points:

God, we want to be a body of believers that are glorifying and magnifying to You and Your Holy name. We want to honor Your Word with every fiber of our being. and I know that a study like this can be difficult for us to palate, help us to strike the balance. To uphold the eternal aspects of Your Word, realizing that You're a God of order, and we want to serve You through the order You've established. and God we want to be those who are examples of what it means to follow Jesus, being in the world but not of the world. So help us to decrease, that You might increase in our lives, that people might look *to* us and see Jesus *in* us.

You know God doesn't desire us to submit to Him through compulsion, or constraint, but in response to His love and His goodness, voluntarily from the heart. Perhaps you've come here today and you don't know Jesus Christ You've never surrendered your heart or your life to Him. He won't force you to do that, you have to raise the white flag of your heart and say God I'm through fighting, I give up, and I give in to You and Your love. God loves you so much that He gave His only Son for you, taking all your sin, all my sin, suffering there on the cross, shedding His blood that we might experience His forgiveness. God wants to be enthroned upon the throne of your heart, you can be washed whither than snow, forgiven of all your sin, receiving everlasting life and all you have to do is ask. God wants to do it, He's simply waiting on you to ask for it. Why not give Him your heart today?