

The Biblical Teaching on the Covering of the Head

(I Corinthians 11:1-16)

Part 1 – The Context

In seeking revelation of what the Holy Spirit teaches us about the covering of the head in I Corinthians 11, it is important to first understand the purpose of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth.

1. Try to identify what are the main themes of each chapter of the book (key verses are listed in parentheses):

Chapter 1 (v10) : _____

Chapter 2 (v4-5) : _____

Chapter 3 (v9) : _____

Chapter 4 (v1) : _____

Chapter 5 (v1,12) : _____

Chapter 6 (v4) : _____

Chapter 7 (v1-2) : _____

Chapter 8 (v9) : _____

Chapter 9 (v11) : _____

Chapter 10 (v17) : _____

Chapter 11 (v3) : _____

Chapter 12 (v28) : _____

Chapter 13 (v1-2) : _____

Chapter 14 (v4) : _____

Chapter 15 (v3-4) : _____

Chapter 16 (v1,19) : _____

2. Read the following verses in the epistle:

1:2, 1:10, 3:9, 3:16-17, 4:17, 5:4, 5:12, 6:4-5, 7:5, 7:17, 10:16-17, 10:32, 11:16-18, 11:20, 11:22, 11:33-34, 12:28, 14:4-5, 14:12, 14:19-20, 14:23, 14:26, 14:28, 14:33

What is the common word or theme in these verses?: _____

What does this tell you about what the type of situations that Paul is addressing? _____

3. Read Chapter 11:1-16 and write down any thoughts or questions that come to mind.

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Part 2 – The Interpretations

People who call themselves Christians fall into 5 broad categories of interpretation of this teaching. We provide here a brief synopsis of what each interpretation believes. In the space provided beneath each section, we encourage you to write down your Biblically-based perspective about that particular interpretation.

Read I Corinthians 11:1-16.

Interpretation #1: This teaching has no applicability to Christians today.

This interpretation states that Paul was referring specifically to the cultural tradition of women covering their head in his time. It goes on to state that since this is not the tradition of the church today, it has no application to us and we can ignore this text of Scripture.

Write down your thoughts about this interpretation (state cross-referenced Scriptural passages wherever applicable): ___

Interpretation #2: The hair is itself the head-covering for Christian women.

This interpretation states that the hair itself is the head-covering based on I Corinthians 11:15, so no additional covering needs to be worn by Christian women.

Write down your thoughts about this interpretation (state cross-referenced Scriptural passages wherever applicable): ___

Interpretation #3: A Christian woman may wear any corresponding meaningful symbol instead of an actual head-covering.

This interpretation states that the actual head-covering that Paul refers to, was a commonly accepted symbol for women in his day, and therefore, some other meaningful symbol that is commonly used in today's age may be worn instead by Christian women.

Write down your thoughts about this interpretation (state cross-referenced Scriptural passages wherever applicable): ___

Interpretation #4: A Christian woman must wear an actual head-covering at all times.

This interpretation states that an actual head-covering must be worn by all Christian women all the time, since it is a symbol of her constant submission to her authority (husband or father).

Write down your thoughts about this interpretation (state cross-referenced Scriptural passages wherever applicable): ___

Interpretation #5: A Christian man must not wear any head-covering when he prays or prophesies in public, and a Christian woman must wear an actual head-covering when she prays or prophesies in public.

This interpretation states that an actual head-covering must be worn by all Christian women whenever they pray or prophesy publicly, as a symbol of their submission to their authority (husband or father).

Write down your thoughts about this interpretation (state cross-referenced Scriptural passages wherever applicable): ___

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Part 3 – RLCF Belief and Application

We believe that God is the head of Jesus Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman (I Corinthians 11:3). Further, the image and glory of God is the man, and the glory of man is the woman (I Corinthians 11:7). We only get to experience this in the New Covenant because of the new and living way that Christ opened up for us (Hebrews 10:19-25), and we therefore take seriously the privilege to be partakers thus of God's glory.

Since we still live in our flesh on this earth and have not yet been given our glorified bodies, we must carefully heed the instruction in God's Word regarding partaking of His glory. We therefore believe that during our gatherings together, every man should not wear any covering on his head while praying or prophesying, and every woman should wear some covering on her head while praying or prophesying (I Corinthians. 11:4-5).

While we *encourage* unity of mind with regard to the practical application of this teaching, we *do not require* this of everyone. We do require this, however, of anyone to whom the elders delegate responsibility in the church – in Sunday School teaching, leading music, public prayer, etc.

We reiterate that the above teaching, while necessary (because it is clearly outlined in the New Testament), is not one of the most important things in the Christian life, because the New Testament does not emphasize it that way. We desire to follow Jesus' example in all things, emphasizing justice and mercy and faithfulness, while not neglecting the other teachings (Matthew 23:23).

Let us always examine ourselves only, and never judge others (I Corinthians 11:28, Matthew 7:1).