

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

"Order & Authority In The Church"

From *creation* to *salvation*, we serve a God who is structured & orderly. Even so, when it comes to the home &/or the *corporate assembly* (which is what Paul points out today) there is order & authority that He has established. – & In many ways it flies against the spirit of our age today, to which we are neither shocked nor surprised because worldliness is opposed to godliness on virtually every level.

But I just want to prepare you because this may be a little bit of a rough ride for you ladies today. However, I trust that we will *all* see the balance before we wrap up and wind down... We're just going to give out God's word unapologetically, in love & let the chips fall where they may. –

Something else you should keep in the forefront of your hearts/minds as we make our way through this passage is that *authority* does *not* equal *superiority*. Nor does being *under authority* equal *inferiority*. – God is a God who is structural & orderly. In order for there to be structure &/or order, there must be roles & responsibilities. It's not about *competing*, it's about *completing*. Completing God's call upon our lives, fulfilling our roles, responsibilities for His glory... But before we go there, look at Vs 1.

Vs 1

To me, this is one of the most remarkable statements that could ever be made that *ought to be* commonplace in the Christian life. Paul, knowing that he was a follower of Jesus, didn't hesitate to exhort the Christian Corinthians to follow after him as he followed after the Lord... Being himself a wiseman, Paul knew that Christians need examples. & Though you may've never sat & thought about it in exactly those terms most of us are aware of the fact that people *need* examples.

When our kids are confused, our neighbors have questions, new believers wondering what path to take, which decision to make... What is the Christlike way here? What is the godly course of action in this, my present situation? Paul says here, "I'm establishing myself for you as an example of what godly living looks like." & Truth be told, this was a rather commonplace thing for Paul to do! When he wrote to the Philippians he said, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*"¹ That's Ch 3. In Ch 4 he said, "*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*"²

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 3:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 4:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Family; don't think that since he was an apostle that he had some sort of super saintly strength that afforded him & the other apostles the power to do something that simply was feasible for the rest of us. He told Timothy to do the same thing. He said, "*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*"³ You don't have to be a "seasoned saint" to be an example, Timothy was a young man when Paul exhorted him in this fashion... "Be an example to the believers"!

Yet, it's tragic how few today are willing to say what Paul said... Rather, because of compromise & ungodliness, we too often say, "Listen, don't look to me, look to Jesus!" & Though it's certainly true that we *all* must ultimately look to Jesus, it's equally true that we all should be an example of what it looks like to *look to Jesus!* – You're telling me to look to Jesus, what does a life that looks to Jesus look like? Will I know if I look to you? If not... I have to ask, why not? Are you *not* looking to Jesus? Ladies & Gentlemen, these are searching questions for us all!

...Let's not forget that we're coming out of the context whereby Paul has been exhorting the Corinthian Christians to be willing to lay aside their rights for the sake of others... That the *right to do something* doesn't make it the *right thing to do*.

At the end of Ch 10 he writes, "...not seeking my own profit (my own well-being), but the profit of many, that they may be saved." The idea is not to think of myself, but to do what I do for the sake of others, that there be nothing standing in the way of them seeing Jesus & surrendering to Jesus. Jesus wasn't thinking of Himself, He wasn't asserting His rights, He served others, sacrificed Himself *for* others, that they might be saved... That's the kind of life (Paul is saying) that we've been called to live as well...

But we note, that this is what we might call a "conditional command". He says, "Imitate me, *just as I also* imitate Christ." In other words, there are limits to my example that you're to follow. So much as you see me imitating Jesus, imitate me. In those areas I'm not measuring up, carry the baton beyond where I've fallen short... Listen, I honestly don't know what most of you think of me. – Perhaps you think that because I'm the guy who stands up here & articulates/communicates the interpretation/application of God's word, that I must be particularly holy or something. And though I will tell you that it's in my heart to honor J.C. & glorify God w/all that I am, others of you who are around me a little/lot more, realize that I'm pretty much the same as anyone else who wants to honor God.

³ *The New King James Version*, (1982). (1 Ti 4:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I have my struggles, my short comings the same as everyone else. So, as much as you see me imitating Jesus, do the same. When I fall short, please don't imitate me, pray for me! Again, ultimately, Jesus is the focus for us all. But generally speaking, we're to be examples one to another.

Vs 2-3

Real quick, before we get into this, I want to alleviate a little bit of stress that can infiltrate through Vs 2 that revolves around this word, "traditions". Because we've been taught/trained that traditions w/in religious world can be toxic, & indeed they can. But when Paul speaks of "traditions" here, he's not speaking of those things Jesus rebuked that were so prevalent w/in the scribes & Pharisees. Those things that lead to us becoming old, non-pliable wineskins having become so rigid & outdated in what we do, when we do & how we do it. Rather, what he's speaking of here is simply the teachings and practices of the apostles, received from Jesus which have been in turn passed on to them. – What's in view isn't ceremonies or rituals, but basic teaching and doctrine.

But it's here in Vs 3 that Paul lays down the foundation for his teaching in the rest of the Ch. Put simply, Paul makes it clear that God has established principles of order, authority, and accountability... Again, what he's *not* establishing is a status of superiority or inferiority & we can illustrate that very quickly & quite simply by keeping the context of the Vs. Paul points out the head of Christ is God...

The bible is clear in no uncertain terms that Jesus is very God of God, He's not *like* God, or someone created *by* God, He *is* God wrapped/robed in humanity. Equal in every way & on every level as God the Father. In fact, in Hebrews Ch 2, the author is developing the superiority of Jesus over the angels & he points out God the Father, calling the Son, *His* God in Ps 45. He's pointing out that God calls the angels to worship the Son... & Then we read, *"But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.'"*⁴ God the Father, refers to the Son as God... So, you're either God or you're not, equal in every way or you're less *than* God therefore *not* God. So, again, superiority/inferiority is not in view here. Roles, responsibilities, accountability... that's what we're seeing established.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 1:8-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus willingly, voluntarily, gladly submitted to the *authority* of the Father. Did that make Him inferior to the Father? No. Even so, the woman who submits to her husband (which is what we're speaking of here as we'll see) (or the local spiritual authority in the public assembly) doesn't do so out of inferiority, but willingly, out of humility in order (like Jesus) to bring God glory.

Btw, that's what Paul is speaking about when he uses the word, "head". The "head" of every man is Christ, the "head" woman is man, & the "head" of Christ is God. Not superiority, but *authority*... I think one thing we all know is that authority is not necessarily any indication of superiority. There may be many cases whereby someone under the authority of a person w/in a company is much more competent in several arenas than is their supervisor or team leader or whatever. But authority creates structure, responsibility & the matching accountability. And *since* there's responsibility & accountability, it is right and appropriate to submit to the one who is head over me, my authority. Whether I be an employee or be it in my family, you get the idea.

Now: we want to keep focused here on what Paul is developing lest we drift. He describes 3 "headship" relationships. Jesus, the head of every man; man, the head of woman, the Father, the head of the Son. In connecting these 3, he establishes the principle of headship as the same among them all.

1st of all the head of every man is Christ. Jesus made it clear, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."⁵ Not some of it, all of it. He's the head of *every* man. Question. Does every man come willfully, in humility, gladly under the authority of Jesus that he might bring God glory? NO. Of all the men I've known, most have had to be mastered by Jesus & have come under His authority (once they *come* under His authority) kicking & fighting in a rebellious attitude that has to be won over...

So ladies, the way I see it. You have one of 2 choices as it pertains to *your* coming under the authority of your husband (or as it pertains to the public assembly, your local spiritual authority)... Because we should point out that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that the head of *every man* is Christ. But he didn't say, the head of *every woman* is *every man*. It's not a general call to submission, every woman to every man. – When you study scripture, you discover (even as is the context here) there are only 2 environments in which a woman is called to come under the authority of a man.

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Mt 28:18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

#1 In her home. God has given the headship (not the dictatorship, the responsibility & accountability) of the family to the man (& we'll see that a little bit more in a minute). & #2 In the church. God has given the role, responsibility of spiritual authority w/in the church to male headship. Doesn't mean that women can't pray, prophesy, serve etc... It just means they do so under the covering of their husband &/or the local spiritual authority in the corporate assembly.

Beyond that. Women, be all that you can be! Run companies, join the military, be the President, knock yourself out. However, w/in the home & the church. This is God's established structure/order. & You can either be like man in coming under the authority of Christ (rebelliously, kicking & screaming). Or... you can be like Jesus in coming under the authority of the God the Father (willingly, in humility, in loving submission in equality).

Again, there's zero distinction here between men & women pertaining to personal worth, ability, intellect or spirituality. Simply roles, responsibilities & accountability.

Vs 4-6

There are a few things we need to unpack here. One thing that I want you to see is that a worship service is a time to honor not only God (which is obviously paramount) but other people as well. Note the word "dishonor" making its way to the surface in a couple different places. The short of it is this. You & me, we can't honor Christ in worship while at the same time dishonoring our fellow worshipers (be it in our attitude toward them, the way we present ourselves around them, you get the idea).

& For the sake of the application of our context he's saying that in the corporate assembly, men are expected to honor Christ (in how they handle themselves) & wives are expected to honor their husbands, even as Christ honors (& in so brings glory) to the Father.

Now, I'm going to let the cat out of the bag here. The way this happens *practically* may vary from culture to culture, but the *principle* at work remains constant. Here; Paul speaks of a head covering. Not a veil (like you might see in Islamic cultures that wraps the face), more like a shawl that's drawn up over the head.

He says that because of this order of authority, it's inappropriate for men to pray w/a head covering, & inappropriate for women to pray w/out a head covering... In many ancient cultures (& in some still today) the head covering was an important public symbol of being under the authority/covering & protection of another.

& To go out in public (as a woman) *w/out* a head was to announce to anyone else that you weren't under any kind of covering & that you were available (not to be made a wife, but as a prostitute).

So Paul is saying, "Hey, for a woman to throw off her covering, that's not an act of *liberation* but of *degradation*, she may as well have her head shaved." Which was a sign of disgrace, the shaved or super short hair on a woman in ancient cultures meant different things in different places, but none of it was good. It might mean you're an adulterous, it might mean you're a lesbian, it might mean you're a prostitute... All of which would dishonor your husband.

That's why Paul says, "Listen, if you're going to uncover your head while you pray or prophesy, ...in for a penny, in for a pound, just shave your head & make your shame & the dishonoring of your husband & the spiritual authority of the public assembly complete in identifying w/the women of the world!"

Now... We see that a woman serving, praying, prophesying, none of these things are problems. The problem is if she does so in a manner that's disrespectful/out of order, dishonoring to the covering that she's under.

However, the man dishonors *his head* (Christ) if he prays or prophesies *with* his head covered. Why? Because he's saying, "I'm not in authority here." Yet because God has established him *as* the authority, it dishonors the Lord, for him to say he's *not* in authority.

But when a woman says, "I'm not under authority here." Even though God has placed man over her, it dishonors her husband. In our culture we don't use head coverings. For our culture, I would say, honor your husband (or the spiritual authority of the public assembly) by not dressing or acting in a way that gives people the wrong impression... Again, the practice may change, the principle does not.

Vs 7-10

The previous Vs make it clear *what* is appropriate (regarding the principle of headship in the church). These Vs make clear *why* it's appropriate.

1 Reason we've already discussed. God has determined an order of authority that (both in the home & the church) that establishes the man as the head. Btw men, this isn't a *call to be* the head, *you are the head!* Now, you're either doing well with it, or you're not, but God holds us accountable either way. It's not something God is calling you to be, it's what you are! Our wives will generally reflect how well we're doing (just FYI).

Another reason is rooted in the order of creation (as we read here).

God created Adam 1st, then gave him responsibility over Eve. “For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” “Nor was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.” It’s found in Gen 2:18. God said that He would make Adam a helper who would be comparable to him... Again, he wouldn’t be there to carry out her agenda/vision, but she was to share *in* & help carry *out* his vision/agenda for the family... & God didn’t bring Adam to Eve, He brought Eve to Adam.

& I realize this idea is offensive to the spirit of our age, but the bible is clear on these matters. Chauvinism & feminism are both destructive to a biblical world view... Again, we’re not competing, we’re completing the role & responsibility God has entrusted to each of us... The man is to be over the woman, as Jesus is over the church. His leadership being seen in loving self-sacrifice & service for His bride.

Let me also say this. If we just stick to the word of God it will solve so many struggles & dilemmas people are confronted w/today. How many genders are there? According to Gen Ch 1 Vs 27 there are only 2. Male & female He Created them. That’s it. To go any farther is to deny & defy the word of God... But that’s always been Satan’s agenda since Gen Ch 3, “Has God indeed said...” He wants you to question the integrity/validity of God’s Word. **How many races are there? There’s only 1. If we believe we all came from Adam & Eve... that’s the end of it. Yes there are different ethnic groups (& those differences are easily explained in the amount of variation God packed into the DNA strands, time forbids us to go into it), but my point is that if we’ll just submit to God’s word, so many of this world’s struggles would be solved so simply.**

The 3rd reason that Paul points out as to why this order of authority is so important, seems almost like a throw away line. He says in Vs 10, **(read)**

How many of you realize that angels are present at any corporate assembly when Christians gather to worship? & Let’s remind ourselves that angels are not omniscient, they don’t know everything (though certainly immeasurably more intelligent than we are). & God has ordained that they should learn (be it of the miracle/majesty of the gospel, God’s word at work in our lives... etc.) through *observing* our lives in Christ. (Eph 3:10-11, 1 Pet 1:12) – So when we depart from God’s ordained order... it upsets the learning curve, violates propriety. We need to understand that God’s plan for the ages transcends you & me. God’s not only teaching you & me, but the angelic community as well. So for the sake of honoring God, for the sake of the angelic community, let’s honor God’s established order of structure & authority.

Not to mention, they themselves honor God in submitting to the order of God. So imagine the offense in observing God's redeemed creation, made in His own image, bought at the price of His own blood, disrespecting/disobeying the very word/wisdom of God in refusing to observe His order/authority...

Let's not forget, they saw Satan & 1/3 of the angels fall from heaven because they *refused* to submit to God's order. They know the destruction that a lack of submission can cause!

Perhaps now you can see a little more clearly why things such as misappropriating gender identity & a blurring of the line between men & women, mutilating their bodies & desiring to be what God has not created them to be is such a violation of God's holy word. Styles that push the thought of zero difference between men & women regardless of the fact of God's creation, His plan & purpose for His people.

Now again, we're not talking about a general submission, women to men. The church, & the home... Politics, business, education... on & on, no limitations. But in the home & concerning the directive leadership of the church, God has entrusted those roles to men.

However, I would say that it's not simply a church issue. For over ½ century our country has seen a massive shift in the way we see/accept authority overall. Citizens don't have the same respect for government's authority; students don't have the same respect for a teacher's authority; children don't have the same respect for parent's authority; employees don't have the same respect for their employer's authority; people don't have the same respect for the police authority; and Christians no longer have the same respect for church authority.

Now ask yourself. Have these changes been good? Do you feel safer? Are you more confident in our culture? Has television and/or other entertainment gotten better or worse? Family, it's fair to describe our present state as one of moral anarchy. Zero moral authority in our culture. All that matters is what I want to do. If I don't agree *with* you, I'm just going to rebel *against* you. That's not indicative of being under authority at all. It only states, "I'll cooperate w/you so long as things are going in a way that's agreeable to me." Which means the only thing that matters is what I want to do.

The attack on authority is a subtle, yet direct Satanic strategy to destroy both our society & the lives comprised w/in it. 1st *Corrupt* authority, 2nd *reject* authority...

Yet order & authority are a vital part of God's very being.

We refer to God in a Triune capacity. 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Person of the Trinity. Yet we don't refer to superiority or inferiority. God the Son, God the Spirit, God the Father, all co-equal. But pertaining to order & authority we see it... So, our failure to submit to Biblical authority, isn't just wrong and sad, it sins against the very nature of God. Remember 1 Samuel 15:23: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." (We need to wrap up)

Vs 11-12

What's the idea here? Paul is saying, "Let's not get it twisted. It's true that woman came from man, but every man since then has come *through* woman." Neither is independent of the other, but there's a critical interdependence that must be recognized.

Married life/& ministry are team sports. If we don't fulfill our role, we can't win. When you watch football, baseball, basketball, any team sport, it takes each one fulfilling their role to create efficiency & success. It doesn't matter how great the quarterback can throw if receivers aren't doing their job. Which is better? The quarterback has authority to call plays, but if receivers, linemen, running backs aren't all fulfilling their roles, they'll never win. It's not about superiority, there's equality, but there has to be structure & authority or it makes for disaster.

Vs 13-16

"Look," Paul says, "Even nature shows that a woman's glory is in her covering." And this isn't saying that long hair on a man is sinful. Paul is simply pointing out that as a general rule, in every culture, everywhere women typically wear their hair longer than men. & It's a wonderful glorious thing, it's not a bad thing.

But if anyone seems contentious... The idea is, "Hey, the practice of a head covering isn't the issue. The principle of being self-serving, Vs recognizing God's structure & order is." What happens outwardly, will be taken care of when we tend to what's happening inwardly in our heart. Honor God, honor one another, & God will be glorified in your life.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your word. May we take it to heart & honor You *from* the heart. We want You to be magnified & glorified in our lives...

Christ can't be magnified in your life, if He's not in your life. That can change right here/now. Turn from your sin, believe in J.C. He'll forgive you of your sin, give you eternal life & make you right in the sight of God.