

Title: Hierarchy, Hats and Hair – pt.2
Text: 1 Cor 11.2-10
Theme: Understanding God's roles for men and women
Series: 1 Corinthians #44
Prop Stmt. We need to consistently communicate our theology to our world through every cultural expression we have.

Read Text: 1 Cor. 11.2-10

I read an article recently about the amount of theft that takes place in many businesses by the workers. Have you ever known of a worker to take advantage of a business? We could spend the next year in here telling stories. On the other hand, have you ever known of an owner who took advantage of a worker? Again, we could spend the next year perhaps talking about the Enron, Tyco, fiascos that helped bring about the Sarbanes Oxley laws. But, it's not just the people at the top or at the bottom or somewhere in the middle – is it? There are people at all levels of a company or business who can abuse that position. In a perfect work environment, there would be no self-glory, no abuse of trust, position or power, no deceit, no concern about who gets the credit. The person at the bottom would happily work hard to make others successful and the person(s) at the top would work to ensure the security, and appreciation of all the employees.

In a perfect marriage relationship there is no self-glory, no manipulation, no deceit, no hidden agenda, no heavy-handedness. There is order, but based on Christ with the Father the order is not an imposed or forced order of control and subordination, but an example of shared love. This shared love is what drives the Father to use His freedom to direct His Son to do those things that will bring great glory to the Son while the Son is driven by this shared love to do those things that will bring great glory to the Father. The mutual commitment of the Father and the Son to the same purpose and goals enables them to carry out their tasks with respect, and in a harmonious and complementary manner. What is the role of a man and a woman in the church and with each other, is one issue. A related issue is how is that role to be reflected? The roles that we have can be reflected in the way that we dress.

Head coverings for men (v.4, 7) and women (v. 5-6) who are attending the formal meetings of the church is mentioned here. One time when Fred was in Russia, he was in the home of a family. In fact, they were in the kitchen, and were about to leave, when Fred suggested that they pray. The lady of the house looked around and grabbed a dish towel and put it on her head before the prayer. Is that what this text is teaching? Is Paul saying that every time a woman prays in church she needs to wear some sort of a covering? Head coverings in church is the surface issue. The real issue is the role of men and women in relationship to each other and their “respect for the otherness of the other in public worship.”¹

But there is a third related issue in this text, and that has to do with hair. How does all of this come together? Let's start with the big picture and go from there.

¹ Thisleton, p.805

I am preaching this message as if you have come to faith in Christ and you are part of this church family. Some of you have not come to faith in Christ yet. You need to. Some of you are not part of this church family yet. But, this passage was written to believers who were part of a local church, and in order for us to fully appreciate this text, we really have to understand the setting. As followers of Christ we are part of a new order and framework. We have a new identity, a new calling, and a new family, but we also live in the midst of the old order and framework where there are cultural clues. We who have become part of His eternal kingdom live in this temporary kingdom. We are here to show the people here the reality of the kingdom that is coming. We use the things of this culture to communicate the reality of the culture to come. For example, I am speaking to you in English. I am wearing a rather traditional outfit. Both of those are cultural. If I were in Jordan, or in East Africa I would speak differently and dress differently. How I dress communicates something to you in this culture. So, it matters how I appear to others to the degree that my appearance is communicating what I should be communicating to this culture about the culture, the reality and the truth of the kingdom of Christ.

For example, I could dress in jeans and a t-shirt and say to you that God does not look at the outward appearance, God only looks at the heart. That is true. In eternity, we will not have fashion shows, we will not waste time standing in front of our closets or dressers trying to figure out what to wear, because in eternity it won't matter. You could say, I am going to dress down now to show my world, that God only cares about your heart. Ok, but there is more to the issue than that. While God knows your heart, no one else does. And while you may be trying to communicate one thing by the way you dress, you also have to be aware that you may be misunderstood. This one thing is clear. Every culture has clues that communicate a message. Whether those clues are wedding rings, head coverings, style of clothing, or length of hair, they are clues that communicate a message. Therefore, this text is dealing with two interrelated ideas: 1) What is it that we are supposed to be communicating and 2) What is an appropriate way to communicate that?

There are some related issues and questions that come up in this passage such as:

- We are not an island, our life and worship affects others (even angels)
 - o How do we influence and reflect upon each other?
- Men and Women have ministry in the church. (4-5)
 - o What are those ministries, what should that look like?
- Men and Women relate to each other in home and in church according to the relationship of Christ and the Father.
 - o Does that mean that man is the source (creation) or authority (ruler) or something else?
- What were the cultural rules of hair and clothes in Corinth?

I have debated (particularly for a sermon on Mother's Day) how much detail should I get into on this subject. I am committed to not boring into this to the center of the earth and

thereby boring you to tears. But, I am most certainly aware that you can appreciate how tender and controversial this subject is. Therefore, I do not want to gloss over it. Dealing with relational problems occupies a huge, huge part of our lives. We are deeply affected by how we are viewed and treated by others, particularly by those who are the closest to us. This passage (v.3) is so clear on this point; that our understanding of relationships is directly related to our understanding of who God is and how God relates and functions as God. The being of God, the essence of God, the character of God and the actions of God are all part of His God-ness. Our human-ness is supposed to reflect His God-ness. So, in order to reflect Him the way I need to, I need to know Who He is and how He functions.

1. **What are We Supposed to be Communicating?**

A. The person and character of God

There is equality with God and there is a unity with God and there is an order of priority with God. There is a same-ness, a mutuality and there is a pecking order, all at the same time.

Father – Son – Spirit	Father	Father
	Son Spirit	Son
		Spirit

Relationships in the little church (home) and in the local church are supposed to operate according to the pattern of God’s relationship with Himself (v.3) and God’s relationship with us (v.3). How does the Father treat the Son? How does the Son treat his church?

B. We are human persons with God-ordained roles.

- 1) Men are to function as men.
- 2) Women are to function as women.
- 3) Church is an orderly and harmonious relationship of different genders.

We are not animals. In order to understand who you really are, you need to start with theology, not zoology. In fact, before you study anthropology, sociology, philosophy or psychology, you must know theology. Theology tells you about Who started all of this. The Creator, created the creation as an expression of His character. Our human-ness came from His God-ness which is why your life is so sacred. But our humanness from God is gender specific even as both genders were designed and fashioned by God and for God to represent God. **“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1.27)** In the beginning, God made both genders to compliment and to complete each other. But notice this please. When we refer to the Triune God, we use the title God. We know that God is Father, Son and Spirit, but the Father is the foremost member of the Trinity. He is not the most important because it is a team effort. He is the most prominent. He is the One that Jesus directed our prayers to. When God created mankind as male and female, He referred to male and female as man(kind). Man is the representative of the two (bi-unity), just as the

Father is the leader, the foremost of the three (tri-unity). Because God created people as male and female is why our lives have a divinely ordained role. When you attempt to change the role, you are messing with the portrait that God has painted to reflect His very being. That being said, this is obviously not embraced in our world, frankly, it is not even embraced by many people who consider themselves followers of Christ.

This passage (1 Cor. 11.2-16) is the turf of a major battle that is being waged within various sections of Christianity over this issue of the role of a man and a woman. The issue of gender roles is not as fundamentally important as the gospel is, but it is not insignificant either. In an effort to eliminate roles in the church and home based on gender, the result is a blurring of the genders. This leads, on the one hand to a genderless, or gender neutral environment where asexuality paves the way for homosexuality. On the other hand, this attempt to eliminate roles really muddies the person and the character of God. I am not arguing for an “old school” position because I am a traditionalist who likes to keep people in their place. Old school does not necessarily mean right school. Not everything in the old school was right, but neither was it wrong. The Word determines what is right school.

There are basically two sides in this debate. One side is attempting to eliminate all functional order in relationships. This side wants to focus only on the equality part of the discussion. They emphasize that before God, there is not a higher value placed on men over women or vice versa. That is true. They point out that we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3.28). The unity of our standing, the equality of our essence, the same-ness of our human-ness is a creaturely and finite reflection of the equality of the Triune God. But there is more to it than that. God is not only equal in essence, God is a triune God with an internal order of priority. The side of the debate that wants to emphasize the equality of God, does not bring this part of the picture into focus, but both parts need to be there because both parts are part of who God is. Is it possible that the equality side of the debate is responding to an abuse by some on the other side of the debate? In other words, there are those men who using this part of the truth for their own purposes demand obedience and submission even as they abuse those under their care? Perhaps, but the failure of some does not justify the revising of truth in the creation of a reactionary theology of the home and church.

I mentioned last week that so much of our understanding of this entire passage rests on how we are to understand the definition of the word “head.” Count them! 13 times from verses 3-10, this word is repeated. The head of Christ is God! What exactly does that mean? Those who are arguing for the elimination of any order of priority want to define the word “head” as source. An example of that would be, when we speak of the head of a river, we often are referring to the source of the river. The way that would be applied in this text would be, since woman (Eve) was created from man (Adam) then, man is the source of the woman, but (according to their argument) that does not put man in a superior position of authority. He is simply the head – source, not the head, as in authority. They go to great lengths to argue that the word head can mean other things besides authority. Granted, it can mean other things, but it clearly refers to that and I am arguing it cannot be ruled out, simply because one does not like the implications of it.

One study by a man whose work I have greatly respected through the years (Wayne Grudem) demonstrates that in a survey of 36 ancient Greek authors, there are 2,336 times this word is used and 2,034 times the word is used to refer to the head of an animal, head of the body of a person. Of the 302 times remaining, 49 refer to a person of authority, while none of the 302 times refer to source.

Now, I am guessing that some of you gals are sitting here saying, “Look, all I want to know is what is your opinion on women wearing hats in church.” There is so much more to this than simply wearing a hat.

Step back with me for a minute from this immediate text. Remember that in Corinth, there were parts of the church who were living without any respect or concern for the others. The strong did not care about the weak, the rich did not care about the poor, etc. One of the points that Paul hammers at over and over and over is that we are responsible to the whole. If you are rich, you have to look out for the poor. If you are strong, you have to look out for the weak. Paul takes situations and says, “Ok, if you are on this side of the issue, how are you supposed to handle this? If you are on the other side of the issue, how are you supposed to handle it? That same tactic is taking place here. If you are a man, you have to look at this issue from the perspective of what do I need to be looking at in my own life? If you are a wife you have to look at this from what God wants you to be focusing on. But there is another issue that is going on here in the church of Corinth. Their church life, their meeting times were crazy. They were chaotic. Later on, Paul says, “look if an unbeliever comes and observes your worship time, he will conclude that you guys are out of your minds!” They were way out of order. What do you have to keep in mind? You are part of each other and we are part of Christ. Therefore, even though the word “head” cannot be limited to “source” and does have the idea of “authority” that does not give the man a blank check of power to wield it any way that he wants in the home, or in the church. He cannot appeal to this and say, I can do whatever I want because I am the man of the house, any more than I can say, I can do whatever I want in the church because I am an elder in this church. There is clearly a sense in which head means one who is pre-eminent, foremost, in charge, but over and over and over leadership in the church is defined in the Scriptures in terms of *initiating actions that are driven by love for those entrusted to your care*. And, the Scriptures define the role of those who are in submission as *reciprocal actions that are driven by love for those who are entrusted with the leadership*.

So, if I am a leader, I need to take actions that are driven by a genuine love and care for those who are under my direction. If I am not the leader, I need to act in a manner that is driven by love for those who are in leadership. Leader or not, I am regardless part of a body, a family of believers that is bigger than me, but nonetheless a body to which I belong and to which I have some responsibility. That is the heart of this entire passage. How can I love others? How can I do things that benefit the body? How can I help? That heart of love is to be expressed in a way that makes that message very clear.

C. That (fundamentally) we are human persons, not sexual objects.

What are we supposed to be communicating? We are supposed to be showing off the person and character of God as we live out our God-ordained roles. God made you as a fully human person either male or female. Our world may treat you like a piece of meat to be used, bought or sold. But God, does not. And neither should we. The irony is, we live in a world that in rejecting the truth about God, throws out the only real foundation and framework for honoring and respecting women. What I have just preached is hated by some self-described feminists as being demeaning, when the reality is, what they are preaching is so destructive. When God's laws are thrown away, we are left with man's opinions. Those with the power enforce their own opinions. In the largest nation and quickly becoming the most powerful nation on the earth, this is what this looks like, China for many years enforced a one-child per family policy. The godless, dehumanizing culture of communism along with the desire of parents to have a son to provide for them, resulted in many, many families killing their baby girls in order to try again in hopes of having a boy. If we can only have one child, then it will be a boy (work, farming, family name, etc.) This has resulted in a country that is completely out of balance in its boy to girl ratio. The need for girls has created an industry, a black-market industry based on a bribery system of local officials that smuggles girls abducted from N. Korea into China where they are sold to men. There are no local officials to appeal to, for if "caught" as an alien, they will be sent to prison, or sent back to their country (often N. Korea) where they will be tried and punished. Melanie Kirkpatrick tells the stories of two girls she calls Hannah and Naomi (ages 36 and 34) both of whom were abducted and taken prison into a living hell. Their escape from this long nightmare was not accomplished by the UN, but by a pastor, a S. Korean pastor Chun Ki-won whose underground railroad system brought them to freedom.²

The most dehumanizing thing a person can do, is to reject the God and His order who actually made us human. Next week we will look at...

2. **How are we Supposed to be Communicating our God-ordained, Gender-specific roles?** (4-10)

Through appearance and attire that appropriately expresses our God-given genders.

² Wall Street Journal, Friday, May 12.2006 Section A page 18 (opinion and editorial page).