

Head-Coverings in Worship Part 3

by Milton Vincent

Milton Vincent explores the biblical teaching on head coverings in worship, emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural context and heart issues.

Duration: 51:10

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1

Topics: "Head Coverings"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of nature as mentioned by Paul in the Bible. He clarifies that when Paul refers to nature, he is not talking about biology or the natural world, but rather the way God originally created men and women to be and behave. The speaker mentions that he has prepared a 20-page resource on the subject of head coverings, but only shares the first three pages during the sermon. He encourages the congregation to come back for future sermons on the topic and emphasizes the importance of studying the text of Scripture to understand and apply its teachings.

Transcript

Well, good morning. I think we had some ushers trying to distribute these during the greeting time, but things were pretty chaotic. So if you did not receive a three-page handout for this morning, go ahead and raise your hand or raise your head covering, and I'll wait till those are passed out.

You're free to talk amongst yourselves. We've got a couple up here, unless, okay, I'm providing the handout on larger pieces of paper this time so that if you want to use it as a head covering, you can use it in that way. But anyway, turning your Bibles this morning to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, for those of you that are visiting with us, we're doing a verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Corinthians, and as we are continuing in our study of this book, we find ourselves once again in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 2 through 16.

And just by way of overview of what we've done and what we're going to be doing, last Sunday, as you recall, in our morning service, we just did exegesis of this passage, and when I say that, I mean we just explained this passage. Our goal last Sunday morning was to ignore any practical issues for today and the question of how does this passage apply today, to set that aside for the moment and just try to understand what Paul is saying and how his first century audience in the city of Corinth would have understood him. And then in the evening service, we did a little bit of a review of what we had covered in the morning, and then we dealt with the practical question of, are head coverings for today? And we spent a lot of time

doing that in the evening.

I think I preached for about an hour, and then we had a pretty long Q&A, as many practical questions were being asked. And so that's what we did last Sunday, and I went to bed Sunday night and had a lot of trouble falling asleep, and I kept waking up during the night and my thoughts were when I'd wake up, it's like, oh, I didn't say this and this was in my notes and or I said this, but I shouldn't have said it this way. I should have said it better.

And I kept waking up during the night, just really troubled over issues like that. And when I got up Monday morning, I grabbed a piece of paper and I started writing out all the stuff that I wish I would have said and things that were in my notes that I didn't get to. And as I was writing that, I was just getting more and more frustrated and thinking if I could just have this day back and be able to cover all this.

But then I realized, Milton, you couldn't have covered it all. There wasn't time. And that's when I realized about noon on Monday that I would lose my sanity if I could not preach on this subject again.

And so I came into the office on Tuesday and I began typing and and making notes. And as far as what I was going to be saying this morning and my goal in typing it out was to be able to provide a written resource for you guys to use in sorting through the issues that are involved in this head covering issue that we began covering last Sunday. And I kept working and trying to format everything and putting all the information on there.

And as of today, it's 20 pages long. And what you have this morning are the first three pages. And what we're going to be doing is I'm going to be preaching on this subject this morning.

And then tonight we're going to be baptizing some individuals. I want to encourage you to come back for that. And I'll be speaking for a little while on the subject of baptism.

And by the way, if you have accepted the Lord and placed your faith in Jesus Christ and you have not been baptized in the waters of baptism, please see me after the service and we'll see if we can get you in for a baptismal service tonight. But anyway, next Sunday morning, we'll be dealing with this issue once again. We'll pick up in page four of the notes that I have and go as far as we can next Sunday evening.

We're having our annual meeting, so we won't be able to deal with the head covering issue and our evening service next Sunday. But then the following Sunday in both the morning and evening, we will once again be in this text of First Corinthians, chapter 11, verses two through 16. So we're going to be here for the rest of the month of January and hopefully that will be enough time to be able to cover all of the issues that I feel need to be covered.

I was thinking, too, you know, I spent a whole month studying this subject and it would be too bad if I preach for one day and I'm done. There's got to be a lot more to say than what I was able to say last Sunday. And so we're going to spend the whole month on this subject.

And folks, as you process this issue through, just keep coming back with an open heart and see what what we're learning together from the text of Scripture and how to apply it. I really want to encourage you to do that. So that's what we're going to be doing this morning.

What I want to do this morning is to just go through the passage again. Last Sunday morning, as we were going through the text, there were things that I just skipped over because we didn't have time to to get to

those things. And I want to really hit on those things and emphasize them this morning.

Also, before we actually do that, I want to deal with one practical issue. And that is, you know, you may have already noticed that in our service today, there are some women who are wearing hats or head coverings. And then there are many women who are not.

And I am very concerned that that we all make sure that we have the right attitudes. I'm sure that all of the ladies who have decided that they should wear a head covering, that they're not judging anyone who is not. I'm just confident that there's nothing of that attitude of pride or judging of others.

But for those of you ladies that that are wearing a head covering today, because that's where the Lord has brought you and perhaps your husband, too, I want to commend you for that, that you've followed the Lord as he has led you through this passage and you've made a decision based upon that. At the same time, those of you ladies that are not wearing a head covering and your reason for not doing that is you still got a lot of stuff to think through, a lot of praying, a lot of talking with your spouse and just working through the text and trying to understand all of the ramifications of what the Lord is saying. And so you are delaying actually doing it until you have thought through the issue more.

I want to commend you for that. I think that is commendable as well. The important thing is that that we not worry about what other people are thinking about us.

We've had some indication that that some have thought, well, should I wear a head covering? Because is everyone else going to be and what will they think if I don't? And all of us need to. And that's totally understandable. But all of us need to just forego what anyone else will think of us and say, you know what? Before God, I'm convinced.

And so this is what I'm going to do or I am not yet convinced. And I've got a lot more thinking to do. And so I'm going to delay taking action until we are done thinking and praying through this issue.

So just keep your perspective in that way. I know for my wife and I, we we've had many conversations this week on the subject and several hours of conversation, several conversations through the week and and talking through the issue, the text and then practical issues. My wife has frequently said, so what do you want me to do this Sunday? And and I've been at a loss as to at times as to what direction to to give to her.

But we we basically what we've done today is we've done what we are so far convinced of because we've processed the issue thus far. And that is when my wife participated this morning in teaching Sunday school and ministering publicly in that capacity, she had a hat on. My wife and I have processed it that far and we feel confident to that degree.

However, I don't think she is, but she's I don't think she's wearing a hat in the service this morning because we've not yet thought to that length through the issue of does this also include merely attending? And so we we are still in process on this and we've got a long way to go. And I just realized that if I'm going to be a faithful shepherd, we need to linger over this passage like we've lingered over many other passages in First Corinthians. I mean, how many pass or sermons did we preach on the marriage issue, divorce and remarriage? We stayed in that text as long as we needed to to cover everything and to turn over every stone that was in that passage.

And we're going to do the same with this. And I want to encourage you guys to keep coming to me. It's been a wonderful conversation this week.

People are dumping articles on me, commentaries, you know, do you have this one? And it's like, well, yes, I do or no, I don't. And, you know, I'm making copies and just some of the conversations that I've had with people. The attitude that I have seen is absolutely wonderful.

And I want to commend you as a congregation for just your open heart, your earnestness and really thinking through what the Lord would have you to do with this issue. Now, I realize in saying that that I'm limited. I'm only going by what I see people coming directly to me.

I don't know what you may be doing, you know, and what your attitudes may be outside of my knowledge. But everyone that's come to me and virtually everything that I've heard about any conversations that have been going on, I really my respect for this congregation has just grown exponentially and it's brought me to tears at some points. I've just been moved.

I don't deserve to be here amongst these people of this congregation. There I was sharing with the elders on Thursday. There are pastors who preach their heart out.

They're better preachers and pastors than I am. And yet they got congregations who sit in the pew and stubbornly, defiantly refuse to do anything their pastor is urging them to do from Scripture. What I'm seeing in this congregation is such an eagerness.

Just just tell us what God says and and we'll do it. And that eagerness, just it just sobers me and it moves me to deep emotion and it brings me before the Lord saying, God, I don't want to lead any of these dear, precious people astray. And if Sunday night everyone came up to me and said, disagree with you, Milton, disagree with you, disagree with you, love you, disagree with you.

If everyone had said that, that would have bothered me and troubled me, but not nearly as much as what I have seen. And that is the opposite, your eagerness to obey God. Just it makes me want to be all the more careful and thorough and making sure that I don't lead God's precious people astray.

One other thing before we actually get into the text this morning, some of you may think, man, you know, this this is an external thing. It's just it's just a head covering. I mean, why spend the whole month of January and in this passage, folks, you know what I'm realizing? This is one of the most important heart issue passages in all of the book of First Corinthians.

There are so many heart issues that this text ends up touching on. It touches on the subject of submission to one's husband. It touches on the issue of leadership.

I mean, that's I've been I've been thinking this week, maybe I'm a wimp of a leader or whatever. Just I mean, should I just tell my wife where I am or should I let her come to that decision? It's touched on those types of things, even in my own heart. It touches on issues of motivation.

You know, why am I going to wear a head covering? What will my motives be? What will my attitude be towards those who disagree and decide not to wear one or at least as quickly as I may have decided? How will I go about expressing that disagreement? How will we go about loving one another in spite of maybe disagreeing on this particular passage? The issue of judging one another and even me as a pastor, just I mean, to what degree am I willing to be faithful to what I think the scripture is saying, or am I going to

be intimidated by that? This is an incredibly important heart issue passage. And folks, that's why we need time to process through all of this, because it's not just a textual issue and an external issue. There are heart issues that are involved here that all of us as a congregation and loving and earnest pursuit of the truth and loving and earnest conversations with one another, earnest prayer before the Lord, loving and earnest conversations with our spouse, doing a lot of self-examination of our motivations and so forth that we work to the end that God is leading us to by being careful to really examine our hearts.

And so this is a heart issue passage in a very big way in the ways I describe. One other thing, folks, I feel very concerned, I would say in my 10 years of ministry here as pastor, no passage has given me more trouble than this one has as far as the ramifications of it all and the potential for problems and conflict and division amongst the people of God. That concerns me very, very greatly.

And I am very much aware that in preaching through this passage, a huge can of worms has been opened and it's a can of worms that can end up creating problems. And I'm sure that some degree of problems are inevitable amongst the people of God as they sort through this issue. And that that troubles me very greatly.

I've lost sleep over that this week, literally. But, folks, I've had to comfort myself with this thought, and that is, you know what, God, you called me to preach the word. That's my calling.

You said preach the word. God did not call me to preach culture. He didn't call me to preach contemporary cultural practices today.

He didn't call me to preach those contemporary cultural practices today and allow that to cause me to erase some of what God's word always called me to do is preach the word. And I am seeking to do that to the very best of my ability with the grace that God provides, although I'm sure very imperfectly. And I comfort myself with a thought that if in preaching through this passage, it opens up a huge can of worms.

I didn't open it. I didn't write this text. Paul wrote this text and God's the one who inspired it.

And therefore, if this text ends up opening up a huge can of worms for us all, if God inspired the text and I'm faithful to preach it, then I am fully confident that our God is capable of giving us wisdom, giving us grace and guiding us as a church body to the destination that he wants us to reach. And so let's keep our hearts open. And, you know, there may be some of you this morning, I hope not, but who say, I just know with one hundred percent certainty this is not for today and I just know it.

I am dogmatic about this and no one can ever change my mind. If that's your attitude, I want you to reconsider. I want you to consider the arrogance of that.

The only way that you can say that is if you believe you have one hundred percent of all knowledge that there is to know about this text and all of its ramifications. After going through about 80 or 90 resources and I've gone through a lot of extra this past week with stuff that people have given to me, I feel like I'm at, I don't know, 50 percent. If that there's just so much that I'm trying to wrap my mind around and going through all the issues involved in this particular passage.

And so just I want you to reconsider. Don't don't say I know it's not for today, because to say that is to arrogantly assume you have all knowledge on this passage and the application of this passage. And none of us in this room have that and at least acknowledge, you know what? Maybe I'm wrong.

I think it's not for today, but maybe I'm wrong. And I will allow that possibility to cause me to this month come every Sunday, every service with an open heart and say, Lord, just show me. Just show me what you want me to do and show me what this passage says and what you want me to do about it in my practice today.

So let's have that humble and earnest attitude and at the same time be oozing grace from every pore as we converse about this subject. Anyway, as you look at the handout that I've given to you with the time that we have before we get to the Lord's table, as I said, I want us to review this text and then deal with some things that we skimmed over last Sunday. And that is this.

Just look at the top of page one of your handout, Paul's primary point in this passage in First Corinthians chapter 11, verses two through 16, is this, that men should not cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Women should cover their heads when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Undeniably, that is what Paul is saying at the very least to his first century audience.

Men should not have their heads covered when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy. Women, however, it's the opposite. They should have their heads covered when they minister publicly through prayer or prophecy.

That is Paul's main point. He's going to teach us a lot of theological truths and other things in this passage. But everything he says is going into making this point that that we look at here, and that is that men should cover their heads.

Women should not when ministering publicly through prayer or prophecy. Now, Paul begins this section in verse two, and this is something we skimmed over last Sunday. He begins by praising them, at least praising the majority for being faithful to this practice of head coverings.

He says in verse two, Now, I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions just as I delivered them to you. I want to encourage you to underline the word traditions. I want to just talk a little bit about that.

The word that is translated. Well, let me tell you why I want to emphasize this. Someone asked about this Sunday night and a very good question.

And it raised the issue that, you know, in our society today, the word tradition is kind of a weak word. We don't think of tradition as being biblically authoritative. It's something separate from that.

But I want to show you that when Paul uses the word tradition here, he is speaking of something that is of equal authority to scripture. In fact, it is scripture in its tradition. The word that is translated tradition is a compound word.

It's actually two words joined together. It's the word to give and then the word over. It means to give over or to hand over, to deliver over.

So as you look at your handout here, literally it speaks of that which has been handed over, that which has been handed or given or delivered over to the church by an apostle. That's what Paul means when he speaks of traditions here. He speaks of a body of teaching that has been handed over to the church from an apostle.

You say, well, how do you know that that's what it means? Well, because of what the Greek word means. But also let's let Paul define it for us. He says, and you hold firmly to the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Now, underline the word delivered, because actually the word that's translated traditions and the word that's translated delivered are the same Greek word, just different forms of the exact same Greek word. OK, the idea literally is you're holding firmly to that which has been handed over just as I handed it over to you. OK, it's basically the same idea in both of those words.

So Paul defines traditions as speaking of that which he as an apostle that he received from the Lord and has now handed it over to them. And he commends them for or at least the majority for holding firmly to this substance of tradition that he as an apostle has handed over to them. I want to have you go to Second Thessalonians, chapter two, where Paul uses the same word in a similar way.

In Second Thessalonians, chapter two, Paul gives us a biblical command as to what we ought to do with traditions that have been handed over to us by the apostles. And he says to the Thessalonians in Second Thessalonians, chapter two, verse 15, he says, so then, brethren, stand firm. And now here's a biblical command.

Hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. So this is a biblical command. If you're saying, well, what should my attitude be towards traditions, apostolic traditions? The biblical command is you got to hold to them.

OK, and Paul tells them, hold to them the traditions that you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us, in other words, from us apostles. You know what that means, folks, that means that what I'm holding in my hands, our New Testament is apostolic tradition that has been handed to us and we have a responsibility to hold to everything it says in our beliefs and also in our practice. How big of a deal is this? Well, verse six, look what else Paul says.

Another passage where he uses the word tradition, he says, because Paul's aware that there were some in the Thessalonian church that were not living according to apostolic teaching on conduct and so forth. And he says, now we command you, brethren. This is in Second Thessalonians three, six.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition. There's the word tradition again, which you received from us, basically for our purposes today, apostolic tradition is contained in the twenty seven books of our New Testament. The word tradition is equated with scripture.

And Paul himself lays upon the Thessalonian believers and the whole church the requirement to hold to these apostolic traditions that have been handed down to us from the apostles. So as I said last Sunday night, this is a very strong word. And it's obvious that anyone looking at the text here would acknowledge that for Paul to use this word to commend them for holding to the traditions just as they were taught and then to move right in in verse three through 16 to speaking about the head covering issue.

What that clearly indicates is that the head covering issue, the teaching regarding head coverings that Paul is going to enumerate here in verses three through 16 is a part of the apostolic tradition that the believers have a responsibility to hold to whatever Paul means by tradition. He views the head covering issue as being inside of that word. And he also views the Lord's table that he's going to begin to talk about

in verse 17 and following inside of the apostolic tradition.

So that's just a little bit of elaboration of this word. But nonetheless, having commended the majority for heeding his teaching to them when he was with them five years earlier on the head covering issue, Paul then in verse three begins to seemingly deal with the minority who were not practicing it. A minority of men were covering their heads and a minority of women were throwing off their head coverings, at least while praying and prophesying.

And Paul wants to correct this. And so he wants to make a case and he makes five arguments to show them why they need to heed his instructions on head coverings. And his first argument is basically this.

You need to heed our teaching on head coverings because of the structure of relationships in God's economy. He says in verse three, I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man and the man, or in other words, the husband is the head of a wife. And God is the head of Christ.

So he's saying this is the structure of relationships in God's economy. Christ is the head of man. Man lives his life in submission to Christ.

There is no intervening human head between the man and Jesus Christ in the home. And then he says the husband is the head of his wife, meaning that the wife is to live her life in subjection to her husband, arranged, arranging herself underneath the leadership and the headship and the authority of her husband and the home. And then also this passage affirms that God the father is the head of Christ.

Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, lives in his existence in submission to the will of his father. He never does anything independent of the will and the good pleasure of his father. That doesn't mean that Jesus is inferior to God the father.

He is equal in essence. And yet he plays a subordinate role in the Trinitarian relationship. And so Paul says, here's the structure of relationships in God's economy, and that is that Christ is the head of every man.

The man is the head of his wife and God is the head of Christ. Therefore, here's here's the ramifications of that, practically speaking. Verse four, every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head and that head is Christ.

Verse five, but every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one in the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off, in other words, cut close or short or her head shaved and be completely balded, then let her cover her head.

Now, we covered this pretty thoroughly last Sunday in the morning and evening service. So I'll not elaborate that other than to simply say that Paul says here's the structure of relationships in God's economy. And therefore, that is why a man should not cover his head when he ministers publicly in the body of believers through prayer and prophecy.

And that is why a woman ought to cover her head when she ministers publicly in a gathering of the believing community. Well, Paul then moves to a second argument, and this begins in verse seven. And you'll find this on page two of your handout.

And that is because of the order, manner and purpose of God's creation of man and woman. And we see this in verses seven through the first part of verse ten. Paul says, for a man ought not to have his head covered.

Now, he's talking about men here and he's saying men are obligated to not cover their heads when they minister through prayer and prophecy. And he says, since he is the image and the glory of God, because God created man directly from the dust of the ground, not through another human being. The fact is that there is now no intervening human head or intermediary between the man and God.

Therefore, the man, Paul says, should not cover his head since he's the image and the glory of God. He reflects God's image and also God's glory. Paul then says, but the woman is the glory of man.

Now, as I said last Sunday, make sure you don't misunderstand this. Paul is not saying that women are not created in the image of God. That is affirmed in the Genesis account of creation.

Paul does not say since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the image and glory of man. He doesn't use the word image again because Paul does not believe that a woman is in the image of man and not in the image of God. He only picks up the use of the word glory here.

Men and women are created in the image of God. But there is a sense in which in a more direct way, the man lives for the glory of God, whereas the woman, her ambition is to honor her husband. Now, let Paul explain what he means.

He says in verse eight, for man does not. Here's what I mean by what I say. Paul says man does not originate from woman, but from man.

For indeed, man was not created for the sake or for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Look at letter B on your handout under argument to Paul says the woman is the glory of man in the sense that number one, she was taken from the man and number two, she was created for the man. She was taken from the man and she was created for the man.

Paul says, that's what I mean. A woman in a marriage relationship, her ambition is ultimately to glorify God. But she glorifies God best by fulfilling her God ordained role of honoring her husband in her submissive role in his life, seeking to honor him.

She or the man is the intervening human head between herself and Christ in that sense. And she lives for the honor and for the benefit and the blessing of her husband. So we want to be careful that we don't take Paul to be saying more than what he himself tells us that he's saying.

OK, and all that we know for sure that he's saying is that the woman is the glory of man in the sense that she originated from him and also she was created for him. Even Eve and all of her beauty, one could have rightly said, wow, look at what a beautiful thing came out of a man. You would say, look at what a beautiful thing God created.

And ultimately she came from God. But you could also say, look at what a beautiful thing came forth from a man. And so even in her beauty, she reflected the glory of man that God had created first.

And also she was created for the man. And so this is the second argument that Paul gives as to why a woman ought to have a head covering. Look at how he concludes this in verse 10.

Therefore, because of these creation realities, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head. Now, what Paul is making very clear there is he's telling us what the symbol is. It's a covering.

And he also explicitly legislates where the covering needs to be located on the person and that is on her head. He says because of this, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority. Where should she have it? She ought to have it upon literally her head rather than somewhere else.

And that's why, you know, you would want to think twice before saying, well, I don't like that particular symbol. I'll just have a lapel pin that will convey that or something else. No, there's significance to the location of the symbol.

The head of the wife is her husband. She is underneath him. And so it is perfectly appropriate that the symbol, as Paul says, of the man's authority be upon on the top of her head to where her whole person is underneath that.

Now, I understand that in saying all of this, this you'll never see this on primetime television. No show will advocate this. And so some of this thinking may actually be disturbing or disrupting to some of you.

But I mean, this is what God's word says. And that's all I can do is tell you what God's word says. And we need to bring our thinking and our practice into line with what God is teaching here.

And so Paul is being very clear here about what the symbol is and the location where the symbol needs to be placed. And that is upon the head of the wife. By the way, Paul uses the Greek word for head 10 times in this passage.

So something about the head is very significant to Paul. Now, if you're reading the New American Standard, you'll see that word had 14 times. But in the Greek, Paul only uses it 10.

But still, that's a lot. There's something very important about the head and the head being covered, the location of that symbol of authority that Paul is advocating here. He then moves to his third argument that is at the end of verse 10, and that is because of the angels, because of the angels.

Now, last Sunday, I gave you a number of different ideas that commentators throw around. I did tell you what I think is the most compelling view, although I am by no means certain of this. And as I say here, the best guess as to Paul's meaning is that he is referring to the presence of angelic beings who are participating with and observing the believing community as they worship the Lord.

When a woman wears a head covering, she honors her head, which is her husband, and shows due regard to her God given place in God's economy. Such actions glorify God and show forth his wisdom and the presence of the angels who are observing. And I say both good and evil angels, because some writers bring out the fact that not only does it make the proper statement to the good angels who are always ministering to us and are present in our midst, though we cannot see them, but even it makes a proper statement to the evil principalities and powers who were the most unsubordinate of all.

What did Lucifer, what did Satan and all of the angels who followed him do? They usurped God's authority. They attempted to do that. God gave them a place, a very high place in his creation.

And the devil and his angels ended up seeking to usurp that they were not content with the place that God had given to them in the structure of relationships and God's universal economy. And they rebelled

against that. They were insubordinate to that.

And when a woman has that symbol of authority on her head, she is making that statement even to the evil angels and principalities and powers and saying to them, whereas you sought to usurp God's authority and whereas you were not content with where God had placed you in the divine scheme of things, I am accepting and assuming my place exactly where God has put me. And I'm not going to rebel against that as you have done. If that is indeed the case, if you really want to get under the skin of angelic beings, ladies of evil angels, wear the head covering because it reminds them of their sin in the matter and that you're doing the exact opposite of what the devil and his angels sought to do long, long ago.

But anyway, we move on to something else I want to spend a little bit of time on. And that is the fourth argument that we see at the beginning of page three, which Paul is saying you need to heed my teaching on head coverings because nature also teaches this nature also teaches this. He says in verse 13, judge for yourselves.

And by the way, I didn't talk about this last Sunday, but there are actually some writers who say, well, look at this. Paul says, judge for yourselves. So he's kind of leaving it up to believers to just do what they think is best.

You know, here's what my thinking is. But you guys judge for yourselves and whatever conclusion you come to. That's totally fine.

There are actually writers who would say that Paul is doing that here. But I think all of us would see the problem with that. But in addition to that, we have a similar type of instruction by Paul back in chapter 10, verse 15, when he's talking about something that is very clear cut.

I mean, look in chapter 10, verse 14. He says, therefore, my beloved flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men.

You judge what I say. Now, in saying that, is he saying I'm going to say something, but you could take it or leave it if you agree. Great.

You know, but if you disagree, that's fine, too. He goes on to say is not the cup of blessing which we bless is sharing in the blood of Christ and is not the bread which we break is sharing in the body of Christ. And he goes on to teach things that are biblically absolutely undeniable.

And he's not saying, hey, just take it or leave it. And he's not doing that here in chapter 11 when he says judge for yourselves and just take or leave whatever I say, whichever way you go. I you know, that's totally fine with me.

No, he's saying judge for yourself. He's saying, guys, I shouldn't have to walk you through this and judge for yourselves on the basis of what I've already taught you and also come to your own determination about this without me just coming right out and having to legislate for you. I want you to think this through and reason to your own conclusion based on what I have said and what I'm about to say.

He says, is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? And then he says, does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him. But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. He's saying, you know what, I've given you some theological arguments from theology, from creation and so forth.

But let me also appeal to nature and nature agrees with me on this. Let me take a parallel issue of hair. And he says, doesn't nature teach you that if a man has long hair, it's a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, doesn't nature teach you that that's a glorious thing? It's a glory to her.

Well, Paul uses that line of argumentation. And then he says for her hair is given to her for a covering. And as we saw last Sunday, the idea is that God gives her her hair through nature as a covering.

And what nature is doing is dropping the hint that there is value in covering up with the external covering that I myself am teaching you about in this particular passage. That's the idea that Paul is conveying. If you want that particular thing, explain more.

Get the tape from last Sunday morning and evening. But I want to say a little bit about nature, because I think some people may look at the word nature and go, well, what does that mean? You know, Paul appeals to nature. You know, I watch the Discovery Channel and I learn about nature and I've not seen anything in nature that explicitly teaches anything about long and short hair.

What is he referring to when he thinks of nature or refers to nature? Is he speaking about mere biology or what? Basically, folks, when you look at the way that Paul uses the word in context such as this, look at the handout here. Nature basically speaks of this. Paul uses the word nature to speak of the way that God originally created men and women to be and to behave.

OK, it speaks of the way that God originally, apart from any intrusion of sin, constituted men and women to be and to behave. And the following three areas, number one, just write the word biologically slash sexually, biologically slash sexually. And then number two, put morally, morally.

That's basically what Paul is speaking about when he refers to nature, the way that God originally created or constituted men and women to be and behave biologically, sexually, morally and also aesthetically, just something intangible. He's put within men and women a sense of aesthetics, a sense of what is fitting and proper and right and beautiful very quickly, folks. And we're going to have to end with this and we won't be able to get to some points.

I want to make an argument five. But hey, we got the whole month of January, so we'll deal with that next week. But anyway, go to Romans chapter one.

Where Paul uses this very Greek word, by the way, the Greek word that is translated nature, it's the Greek word we get our English word physics from. OK, physics just speaks of the study of natural things and the way natural things work. That's the essential idea, the study of matter and natural things and just the way things work in our our universe.

And that's kind of it comes from this root idea of that which is natural. Verse twenty six, Paul is speaking of those who are descending down into reprobation. And he says in verse twenty six of Romans one, for this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.

That word unnatural is merely a negative form of the very word that Paul uses in our passage this morning. And then he says, and in the same way, also, the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts. And so basically he uses this root word three times in these verses.

And what he is saying is that homosexual behavior is unnatural. It may feel natural to the person behaving that way. However, it is not the way that God originally created that individual or any individual to behave.

They are doing something biologically and sexually that is unnatural. It is not the way that God originally constituted men and women to be. God is not responsible for this.

It is unnatural behavior. Now, go to Romans chapter two, where Paul uses this same word again. So Paul would say nature teaches heterosexual behavior.

That's basically what we can draw from this passage in Romans one. Nature does not teach or advocate or countenance in any way homosexual behavior. Look at what he says in Romans two fourteen, where he uses the same word again.

He says, for when Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively underline the word instinctively, your translations may say naturally or by nature. That's the word we're going after. Underline that word.

They do instinctively or naturally the things of the law. These not having the law or a law to themselves and that they show the work of the law written in their hearts. OK, basically, Paul is saying, speaking of nature as being the way that God has constituted men and women morally and just ethics.

OK, when a totally pagan person who's never read the scripture, has never heard the word of God preached, has never read anything in scripture, has never read the law of God, when he says to himself, you know what? I kind of want to steal this thing, but that just feels wrong. I'm not going to do that. Or I want to lie in this situation, but I'm not going to do that because that just feels wrong.

What that person is doing when he makes the right decision is, Paul says, what he's doing is he's behaving naturally in the sense that he is actually behaving in that moment instinctively, according to nature, the way that God originally created men and women to behave. You understand that our world today thinks that, hey, just do what comes natural. And that often speaks of sin.

Sin is not natural to the human condition. It is an intrusion into the human condition. Look at the bottom of the box here.

People behave most naturally when they behave as God originally created them to behave. But it's interesting in Romans 2 that Paul actually uses the word nature and he equates it with the law of God written in the hearts of men and women. They're one and the same thing.

So it's not just biology when we use the word nature as Paul uses it, but it also speaks of just that unwritten code of ethics that everyone has in their hearts that they can either heed or ignore. But basically, nature is equated with that intangible thing in the heart of every man and woman that tells them ethically the right thing to do, even if they've never read the scripture. And as we go back to first Corinthians 11, it also speaks of the way God created men and women to be and behave.

Number three, aesthetically, there's something intangible that God has placed in the hearts of men and women that gives them a sense of aesthetics. And what I mean by that is it gives them a sense of what's fitting, what's proper, what's beautiful, what's right, even aesthetically. OK, and what Paul is indicating in first Corinthians 11, that this thing that he calls nature teaches that if a man has long hair, it's a disgrace.

And nature also teaches that if a woman has longer hair, it is a glory to her. You know what, folks? And Paul alluding to nature here, all he's doing is giving another creation argument. Do you see that he's referring to the way that God has just simply created, originally created men and women to be and behave apart from the intrusion of sin? Well, we want to have time for the Lord's table this morning, so we're going to stop right there.

Next Sunday, we'll deal with argument number five. There's a few interpretational issues that we need to explain with regard to that, and then we'll continue on beyond that. And I'll be like I said, I'll be handing out plenty of paperwork for all of you guys so that you can use that as a resource as we continue to work our way through this issue.

Anyway, just for the sake of time, I'm going to ask all those who are assisting with communion to go ahead and get in position, because as soon as I'm done praying, I'm going to ask you to come up so that we can begin our service. Let's look to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we think of because of that, Lord, we were sinners worthy of eternal damnation, enemies of yours, living our lives in the lust of our flesh, pride and arrogance, thinking we know better than God.

And yet, Lord, as sinful as we were and as sinful as we are, you you sent your son into the world to bring us salvation when we were running from you and going our own way. You pursued us. This is the most amazing love story that's ever been told, and we are the objects of that love.

You sent your son, Jesus, into the world to die on the cross for our sins so that through him we would have atonement. And have salvation. Lord, you've given to us the ordinance of the Lord's table so that we can, by partaking of the elements of the bread and the cup, remember what you have done.

And loving us so much that you've given us salvation through your son, Lord, we just pray that as we celebrate the Lord's table over the next few moments, that our focus would be entirely upon Jesus, entirely upon you and your love, and that we would meaningfully partake of the elements portraying our communion with you and these wonderful realities of salvation that you have so graciously granted to us. Continue to guide us, Lord, as we meditate in your presence in Jesus name.

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