

Weekly Devotionals: Dear Church | November 20, 2022

For our devotionals this week, we're engaging God and the Scriptures with our head, our hearts, and our hands.

Each week you'll have an opportunity to learn (head), to engage how the Scripture passage intersects with your life (heart), and be prompted with some action (hands).

Our hope is that this devotional will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

And this week, since our topic is more controversial, we're making our weekly content a bit more robust. Our hope is to provide extra questions to help you better understand it, wrestle with it, and ultimately, apply it.

HEAD

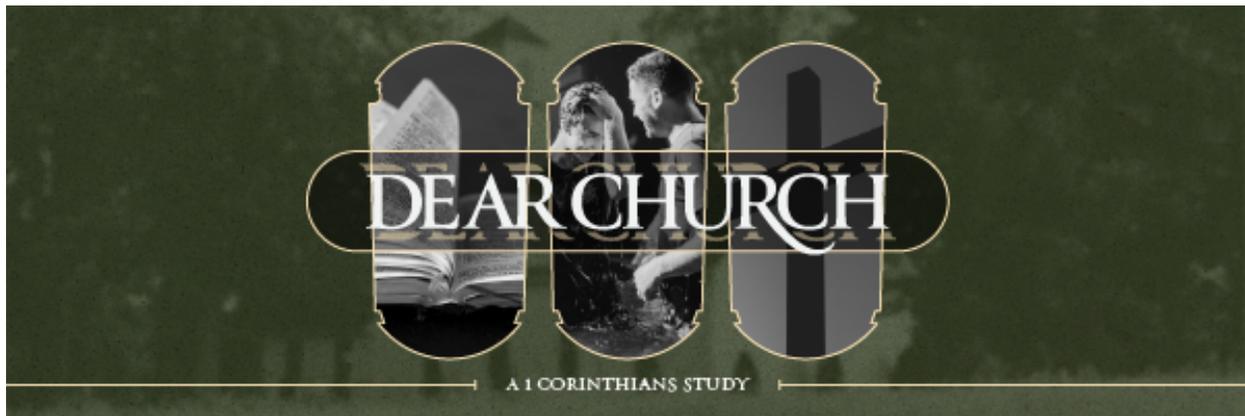
1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is one of the most controversial passages in the Bible. Let's see if we can't break it down to help us understand what's happening.

To begin, start by reading the text below.

2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.



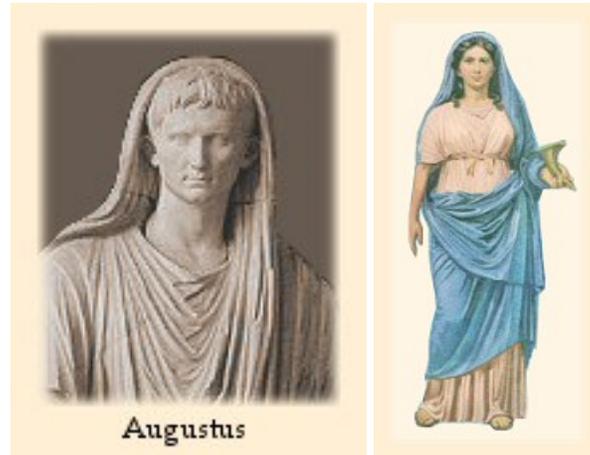
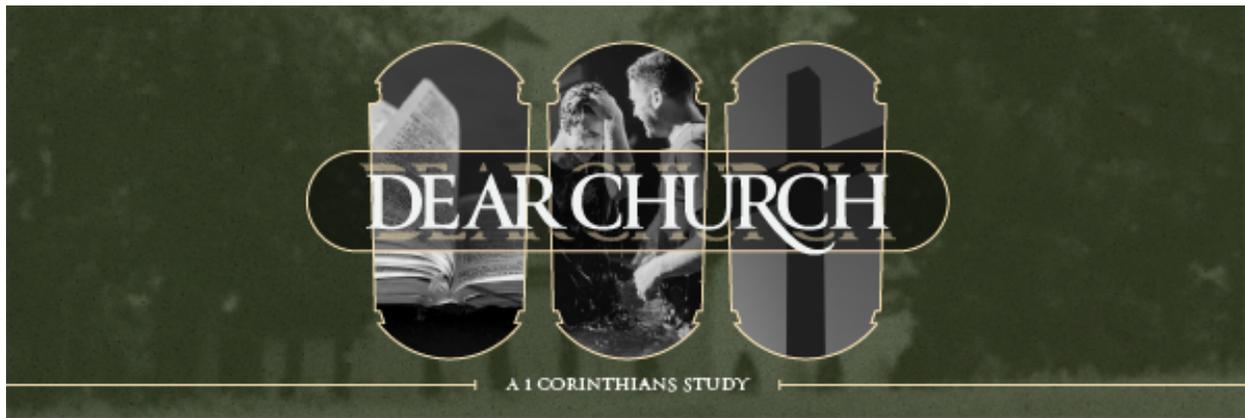
11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

With a passage like this, it's important to know that Paul had cloth coverings clearly in view in this passage. Historically, men did not wear pants, and women did not wear skirts. There were no shirts or blouses such as we wear today, either. Both sexes usually wore flowing garments like in the images you see below.



Men and women would wear toga-like clothing with extra cloth that they could put *over* their heads. And, usually, when they did, it wasn't much (see the next two images).

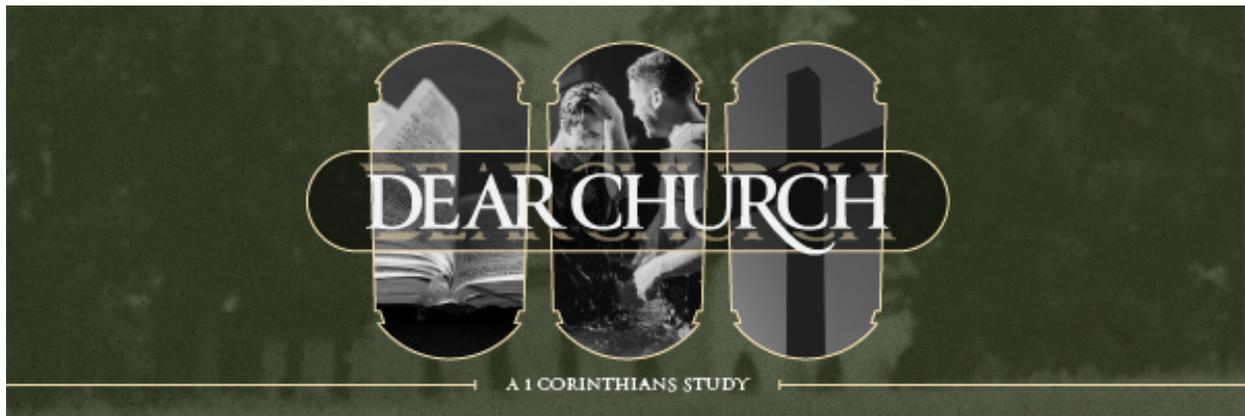


Men and women would wear their head coverings for various reasons: different rituals, based on the weather, etc.

In this passage, specifically in **verse 3**, Paul wants the men and women to do different things regarding their head coverings. According to this verse, who does Paul say the “head” of man is? Who does he say the “head” of woman is? Who does he say the “head” of Christ is?

As you go back through these verses, what are the specific commands that Paul says to the men (**verses 4 and 7**)? What are the specific action steps Paul says to the women (**verses 5 and 9**)?

What is the *specific context* for head coverings that Paul gives in this passage (see **verses 4-5**)? When does Paul require the use or non-use of head coverings?



What is important to note is that women in the first century in other contexts (Jewish worship services, for example) were omitted from praying or prophesying in worship gatherings. They were wholly silent. They were just spectators. In the Christian gatherings, this wasn't the case. Women *were* allowed to participate. They *were* allowed to pray and prophesy. Paul's only stipulation was that they put a covering on their heads (and conversely that men uncover their heads).

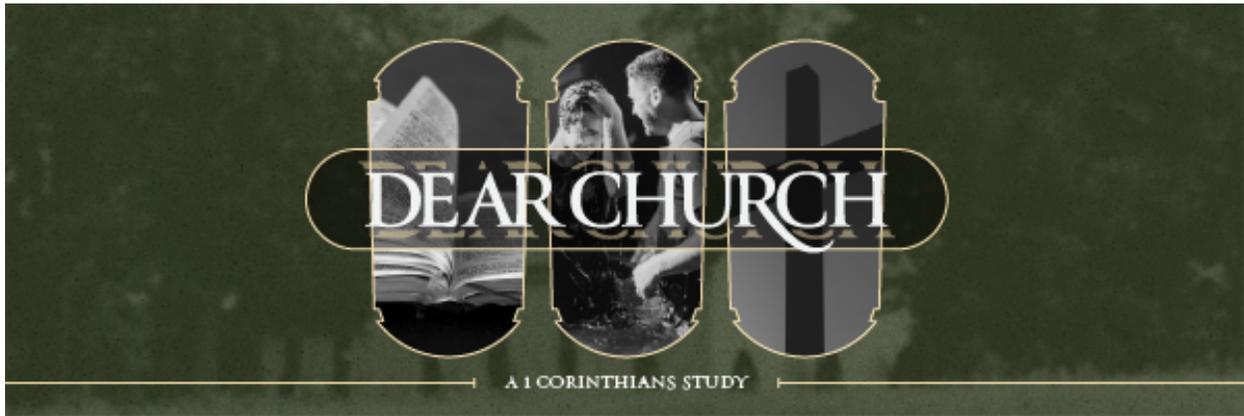
Now, *why* is that?

Comb through **1 Corinthians 11:2-16** one last time. What are the *arguments* Paul gives for *why* men should have their heads uncovered and *why* women should cover theirs (see the reasons Paul gives in verses like **5-6** and **7-10**)?

Following this, perhaps it'd be easy to say the Bible's teaching devalue women. How do Paul's words in verses **11-12** contradict this?

While we might read a passage like **1 Corinthians 11** and think that there could be no other reason for Paul's language than bigotry or prejudice, Paul is emphasizing distinctions and differences between men and women. These distinctions in our roles result in male headship and authority in the church.

The application of these transcendent roles is the non-wearing of head coverings during prayer and prophesy time for men and the wearing of head coverings for women during prayer and prophesying time. These actions are in place to symbolize the transcendent gender roles that exist since woman was created, according to Paul, *from* man and *for* man.



HEART

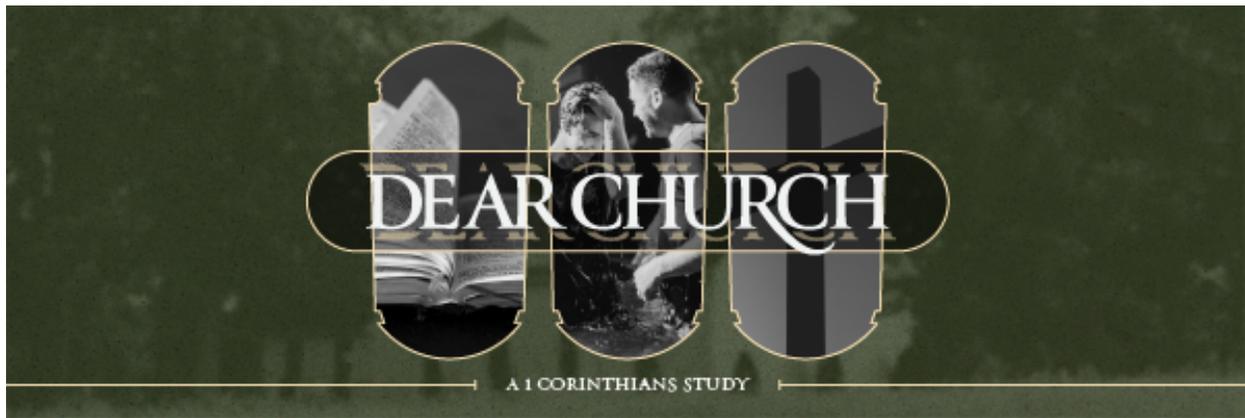
As you look to engage your heart with this passage this week, consider these three questions:

1. Honestly, how does first reading a passage like 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 make you feel? Write out 1-3 words.
2. In general, when it comes to Scripture that *conflicts* with how you feel, do you sense a willingness to submit to it or, if you're honest, do you try to make Scripture submit to you? Why is that? What would you like to be the reality for your life?
3. As a man, who in your life has set a godly example of what it means to be a man? What has made their example so worthy of emulation? As a woman, who in your life has set a godly example of what it means to be a woman? What has made their example so worthy of emulation?

HANDS

As we wrap up our time with **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**, think through how it applies to our lives using these final questions.

1. How might God be challenging you to grow into a man (or woman) according to these verses?
2. Write a prayer to God expressing how these verses make you feel. Take your thoughts to Him in the space below.



If these verses upset you, express that to Him. If these verses make you angry, pray that to Him. If these verses have alerted you that maybe you're not living into the kind of man (or woman) God has called you to be, ask God for help in reconciling that.