

# “He/Her/Xem and Head Coverings” // 1 Corinthians 11:1–16 // *Cutting Through the Noise* # 11

[Video: MLK, [excerpt from “Letter from Birmingham Jail”](#)]

**Prayer:** We have reason for lament and celebration; we value life from womb to tomb.

- Over one million abortions in NC since abortion became legal in 1973.
- 30,004 abortions in NC in 2020; 6752 of these abortions were in Wake County.
- On the racial front, we lament damage from years of discrimination; I think of lynchings as recent at 1981. Damages left in the justice system and the poverty burroughs. Use us as an instrument of your peace and healing.

## Introduction

If you have your Bibles, open them to 1 Corinthians 11, as we continue our march through Paul’s 1st letter to the Corinthians.<sup>1</sup>

Today is Varsity level week--the following message is going to be one

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<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted: Tim and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*; David Platt, “Men and Women in The Church (Part 2),” sermon preached June 6, 2021; Kevin DeYoung, *Men and Women in the Church*; Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 2013), 41–42. John Mark Comer, “First Corinthians: Image,” sermon preached May 8, 2011; Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You* (The Good Book Company). Tim Mackie, “Book Overview: 1 Corinthians, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/>.

of the most difficult, yet important, messages you’ve heard. I say this because you’re not likely to hear what I’m about to say anywhere else besides a Bible-teaching church. You wonder where Christians stand as aliens, oddballs, to the world. You’ll see it today.

Remember, Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is divided into 5 major sections. Part 1, Paul addressed:

1. Divisions in the church (chapters 1 – 4);
2. Questions surrounding sex and singleness (5 – 7);
3. How to navigate controversies surrounding meat offered to idols (and other controversies that kept them from reaching people) (8 – 10)

(today we enter the 4th section)

4. **Corporate worship wars (11 – 14)**

And then after we spend a few weeks here, we’ll hit the final section, which deals with:

5. Questions about the resurrection (15)<sup>2</sup>

This fourth section is a doozy, so for the next couple of weeks, put on your theological flak jackets because there’s a lot of shrapnel flying about.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Andrew Wilson; Tim Mackie; Kevin DeYoung, *Men and Women in the Church*.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about some of the topics I address in this sermon (specifically women in ministry and gender identity), see our position paper on women in ministry ([One in Christ](#)) and these books and articles about transgenderism and gender dysphoria: “[Five Things Every Christian Should Know About the Transgender Debate](#),” by Andrew T. Walker; Transgender, by Vaughan Roberts, and Understanding Gender Dysphoria, by Mark Yarhouse.

The subject today is women and men in the church. Some of the most confusing, misinterpreted statements found anywhere in the New Testament are in these verses we are about to read. And because of those confusing phrases, a lot of people ignore this passage. I'm going to bet that even for those of you who grew up in church, you've never heard a message about this passage.

The tragedy is in so doing they miss out on some incredibly timely and important things the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us. Listen: Every word of Scripture is life, and it's all written for our good. I want to know all of it.

So, today, I'm gonna teach you not just what this passage says; I also want to show you *how to read* a passage like this one.

You ready? Everybody take a deep breath. Not too deep and don't breathe on your neighbor--Omicron.

2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions just as I delivered them to you. 3 But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head. 5 Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since that is one and the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman doesn't cover her head, she should have her hair cut off. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her head be covered.

7 A man should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God. So too, woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come

from woman, but woman came from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. 10 This is why a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman. 12 For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman [that is, we all come from a mother], and all things come from God.

13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself 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 her hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to argue about this, we have no other custom, nor do the churches of God.

What could possibly be confusing about this? Self-explanatory, right? Let's pray...

I told you. OK, what are we supposed to do with this? I was at the Duke / Miami game last Saturday night when Duke lost a heartbreaker right at the last second. They were down by 2, and you thought for sure Duke was going to hit the last shot, because they always seems to do that, and the guy had an open look, but he missed. And when he missed, the place went from absolute pandemonium to dead silence. It felt like a UNC fan's dream of heaven. As Coach K walked out the arena, he had his head back like, "I'm way too old for this." That's how I feel with this passage.

**There's a number of interpretive challenges in this passage:**<sup>4</sup> For one, we're not sure if by "head covering," Paul means an actual covering (like a veil or shawl) or if Paul is talking about just having long hair. He seems to imply both things in this passage.

**Second, we're not exactly sure *why* he's concerned about women wearing a shawl** (is it a modesty thing? Or a gender-distinction thing or a show-of-respect-thing? He seems to pivot back and forth on that, too.)

**Third, what does it mean that the 'man is the head of the wife'?** If you are familiar with biblical scholarship, you know that question has killed a lot of trees. You see, "kephale," the word Paul uses for head, usually means 'authority'--like 'head of school,' or 'head of the staff'--but in some contexts it can mean 'source,' like the 'headwaters' of a river. So, which does Paul mean here? Authority or source?

**Fourth, even after we figure all that out, we are not quite sure how to apply this in our context.** Is Paul saying in this passage that women should wear veils in church? Is it a sin for a woman to come in here with bobbed hair cuts? Were my Independent Baptist forefathers correct in saying that based on this passage long hair on a man is sinful? Is John Muller (pic) going to get fired as soon as this sermon is over? How many of you grew up in a church where this verse was quoted to say that men shouldn't have long hair? Anybody remember the song? "If your hair's too long, there's sin in your heart. Get it cut today! Make a brand new start...You'll live a life of fear and dread, with that tangled mess upon your head." So, is that what it's saying?

**One more reason this passage is particularly challenging:** We get understandably sensitive when we talk about gender issues in our society because there's been so much misinformation and confusion and stereotypes around these topics. Maybe you've seen women subjugated or disrespected and oppressed. Maybe you grew up in a church where men were the only ones who ever really did anything; they said that women were equal, but their role in the church was basically to make coffee and copies and organize the potluck suppers--no real ministry, no decision making. On the other side, we now live in a culture that says that all gender distinctions are sociological constructs. You can be biological sex--"he" but gender-identified "her"; or non-binary they/them/xem, and if you insist on saying gender is a real thing, you can lose your job. Just ask J.K. Rowling.

If it helps encourage you, the context Paul was writing in was even more contentious than ours. On the one hand, you had the Jews, who were uber traditional and patriarchal. On the other side, Corinth was one of the most sexually confused societies in history--Remember I told you that the word "Corinthianize" in Greek was actually used as a verb: to "Corinthianize" someone meant to sexually corrupt them. Sexual promiscuity was rampant; historians tell us there was a large gay and lesbian community; transgenderism was a big thing there, too: Cross-dressing was common, by both genders. There was even a division of the gladiator games where women would shave their heads and conceal their femininity and enter the arena as if they were men. That's the context in which the Apostle says these things.

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<sup>4</sup> I owe the below to Andrew Wilson

That's the context into which Paul says these things. He's speaking into, correcting, both audiences.

**Well, I have 4 questions for this passage:**

- **First:** what does it mean when Paul says the man is the head of the woman?
- **Second,** isn't that just a cultural thing? Haven't we moved on past that? Wasn't Paul just making an accommodation for an ancient people?
- **Third,** what's the deal with the head coverings and **fourth,** what does all that mean for us?

### 1. What does it mean for the man to be the "head" of the woman? (vs. 3, 8–10)

(Another deep breath. Here we go.) I'm getting too old for this.

Well, as I mentioned, the word for "head" in Greek is "kephale," and it can either mean "authority," like the "head of the staff," or, "source," like the "headwaters" of a river.

It's pretty clear in this passage that Paul means both, and that one implies the other. According to Genesis, Eve was created out of the side of man, which means he is her 'source,' and that order has some kind of implications.

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<sup>5</sup> See Andrew Wilson

According to vv 8, 9, and 10 there is a flow of authority, even a flow of glory, in how God set up the relationship of men and women. While they are a complementing pair, both made in the image of God, there is a sense in which woman comes from the man and was created for the man that is not true in reverse. He was created first; she was created from his side; she was called the *edzer kenegdo*; 'the helper.'<sup>5</sup>

In other places, Paul directly connects this idea of "headship" to submission: In **Ephesians 5**, for example, he says: **22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.**

Him being the head implies a submission in certain relationships.

Writer Hannah Anderson puts it this way: **"At its most basic, [Scripture] makes two claims [about the ministry of men and women]: first, that men and women are equal image bearers worthy of equal honor and value; second, that men and women hold different roles, with men exercising a 'headship' that corresponds to a particular kind of authority in the church and the home."**<sup>6</sup>

Now, if there ever were a loaded concept to talk about in church, headship and submission would be it, so let me stop and tell you a few things that headship does *NOT* mean.

- A. **Male "headship" does not mean the inferiority of the woman:**  
*The book of Genesis, that Paul quotes from, is clear that both men and women are made in the image of God. Differently, yes--each*

<sup>6</sup> [Complementarians Aren't Inherently Patriarchal | Christianity Today](#)

reveals God's glory and character in different ways, complementary ways. Differently, yes, but equally. Paul in another place, Gal 3:28, is going to say there's no distinction in Christ; what he means isn't that we aren't gendered anymore, but that men and women are both of equal value.

**Even in saying, vs. 7**, that the woman is the "glory" of the man, Paul is not demeaning her. She was created as a glorious complement to the man: in many ways BETTER!

- I remember one time in our family devotions we were discussing this, and I pointed out how when the writer of Genesis describes the creation of Adam and Eve, it uses 2 different words for "create." For Adam, he uses the word "bara," which just means "create." He uses a different word for the creation of Eve, "banah," which means "fashioned," or "designed." The man was just created; the woman was designed. Our daughter Allie, who was 7 at the time, said, "Oh, it's like Adam was God's 'sloppy copy' before he made it prettier with Eve." I said, I guess you could see it that way.
- **Andrew Wilson** uses this illustration: "The apple is the glory of the apple tree. The tree is the source of the apple. So which is better? Neither. But apples shouldn't act like trees and trees shouldn't act like apples. They're both good and useful but they have a unique relationship with one another that is good and right and shouldn't be muddled. To muddle this relationship is to say that God's design isn't good."
- **Men and women can play different roles in relationships without implying the superiority or inferiority of one or the other.** Here's how I know that: See what Paul says in vs. 3? **3 But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the**

**man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ."**

*God is the head of Christ.* God, there, btw, means Father. God exists eternally as a Trinity, which means there are 3 distinct persons in God--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Spirit--but there's only one God. Jesus, of course, is not any less God than the Father, which means he is fully equal to the Father. But when he came to earth, he submitted to the Father--he said things like, "Not my will but yours be done." Though he was fully equal with the Father, he looked at the Father as his head. That was not an assault on his dignity, nor did it reduce his equality with God. And the point is, *if it wasn't an assault on Jesus' dignity to do that, it's not an assault on you or me, either. Submission is something that God commands of all of us in various capacities.* Submission is a Christlike quality that all of us have to learn and it doesn't imply inequality. Think of it this way: One of our elders is a policeman. Which means when we're doing church stuff, I'm his head, his authority. But the moment we drive out on that road, he becomes my authority, because he has the blue and red lights of headship. Being in submission to me in here does not imply his inferiority. or vice versa.

**B. Male "headship" does not simply the subservience of the woman.** *As if my wife exists as a serf in my house.*

- While the command given to her is to submit to me as the head, the command given to me is to "lay down my life for her." To love her like Christ loved the church. I would suggest that I have the harder of the two commands. I have to get up and think, "How do I lay down my life for her? How do I put her first? Where do I need to suffer so that she can thrive?" If I am obeying this command, btw, it means that I will lose 95%

*disagreements in my house voluntarily, because I put her needs and interests above my own.* Yes, I'm given some authority to lead, but it's not authority to get done what I want done; it's authority to help her and the family flourish. It's like Pastor Tony Evans says, "Spiritual headship for the man is not license to do what you want to do, but empowerment to do what you ought to do," which is lay down your life for your wife. Guys, if you, as a man, are not regularly asking your wife, "How I serve you?" and losing 95% of the disagreements, you are not fulfilling your role in the marriage. Forget about submission for a while; you focus on what God wants from you and you might find that submission from her comes a lot more easily.

- C. **Male "headship "does not imply independent decision-making on the part of the man.** God gave to each gender a different set of filters through which they see situations and they work best when they are leading together.
- Listen, ladies: Even though God always refers to himself as a "he" in the Bible, he often compares himself to a woman. There are certain qualities of his character that are better revealed in women than in men. For example, he often talks about how he relates to his people in terms of mothering. In Isaiah he said that he was more attentive to his children than a doting mother; in Matthew he cared for his prodigal child Israel was like a broken-hearted mother. Women, in general, have a stronger relational sensitivity and a stronger nurturing instinct than men, and that is by design. Those instincts bring invaluable perspective into every decision. Churches or families where men make all the decisions, alone, are going to

end up in trouble. I know. I spent 3 years trying to fix this in the SBC.

- No--saying that "man is the head" and that "the wife should submit to the husband" doesn't mean that women are absent from decision-making, just ***that in a tie, the man bears the weight of making the final decision.***
  - **Tim and Kathy Keller use this great example** in their book *The Meaning of Marriage*: Decision to move to NYC. He felt yes; she no. The time had come to make the decision; they couldn't put it off any longer. So, he conceded: "OK, if you don't want to go, we won't." **I love this story**: His wife Kathy said, "Oh no, you don't, you coward. You are not making me bear the weight of this decision. You have to make it." He had to make the decision, after getting her input, for what God wanted for the family. Again: "Spiritual headship is not license to do what you want to do, but empowerment to do what you ought to do." I will tell you: Number of times this has actually happened I could count on 1 hand this has happened.

*So headship in the home means that in a tie, the man has to cast the deciding vote.*

- **In the church, the "headship of men" means that they alone bear the weight of occupying the office of pastor or elder.** In several places, here in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, Paul makes clear that that office of pastor/elder (and in the NT those are the same office--there is no distinction)--that office, which carries the weight of the official teaching ministry, and governance and guidance and guardianship of the church, that office sits on the shoulders of qualified men because that's

how God designed it. Which is why here at TSC, only men serve in the capacity of pastor-elders.

*But that leads me to (D), and this is an important one--*

#### **D. Male “headship” does not mean that women cannot teach and lead in the church**

Notice, in this passage Paul assumes women ARE praying and prophesying publicly in the church assembly. **Vs 5, women - WHEN you stand up and pray and; when, not if - WHEN you stand up and prophesy in the church service--when you deliver a Spirit-given word from God like Mary did in Luke or Deborah did in Judges or Huldah in Chronicles or Priscilla in Acts or Phoebe in Romans...**

WHEN you’re proclaiming God’s message, do it in a way that doesn’t overturn God’s design for the genders; that is, don’t do it in the capacity of an elder or pastor.

Here at the TSC we believe that women have access to all the spiritual gifts that men do--including teaching and leading--and they can and should develop them and use them in the body of Christ at the highest levels. We have women that lead teams here, teach, speak into decision-making, and just about everything else. But we respect what God says in 1 Cor and 1 Timothy and don’t have them do that in the capacity of pastor/elder. (BTW, if you want more on how we flesh that out, check out our paper, **“One in Christ: The Role of Men and**

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<sup>7</sup> One in Christ Jesus: The Role of Women at The Summit Church, <https://summitchurch.com/article/one-in-christ-jesus-the-role-of-women-at-the-summit-church>

**Women at TSC,”** which we will send to every one of you via email on Monday, or you can find it in my transcript for this week.)<sup>7</sup>

Bible teacher Jen Wilkin, who has spoken here at TSC: **“The challenge for [those of us in church leadership is] to consider whether [we are] crafting a church culture that *permits* women to serve or one that *pursues* women to serve.”<sup>8</sup>** We wanna be the latter, and where we haven’t been, I’d ask your forgiveness.

Finally, on this:

#### **E. Male “headship” does not mean that women cannot lead in society**

A lot of times passages like this get **over-applied** to say that women shouldn’t have jobs outside the home, or shouldn’t lead men in any context, like in the government or workplace. That is far beyond the scope of what Paul says here. Paul’s main arena for application is the home and the church. Beyond that, we shouldn’t make any rules because God doesn’t. **The paragon of the wise woman in Prov 31 clearly has a robust, high responsibility** job with lots of people working for her; Deborah in the book of Judges was a ruler at the highest levels of national leadership; so was Queen Esther. So, let’s not over-apply.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-complementarian-woman-permitted-or-pursued/>.

## 2. Isn't the whole concept of 'male headship' a cultural accommodation for an archaic society? (vv. 12–14)

Isn't Paul just making a cultural accommodation for a backward society, one that is irrelevant to us now that we've progressed so far?

No, for 2 reasons. Paul says that this divine order is rooted in creation itself. In vv 12–14 Paul says, "these things are true because of how God created men and women." In vs. 14 he says "nature itself" teaches us these things. Other places Paul talks about headship he does this too--like Ephesians 5; he points back to the created order as the pattern, not a contemporary culture. If Paul was only talking about a cultural situation, he wouldn't have gone back to creation.

And, by the way, when he references creation, he references pre-fall creation. Before the human race fell into sin. I point that out because some people say that any gender distinctions are the result of the fall and once you come to Christ all gender roles or distinctions are removed. But that's not true--whenever Paul talks about headship, he appeals to the pre-fall design. Creation as God intended it.

The second reason we know this is not a cultural accommodation is that Paul ties this role-playing to the demonstration of the gospel itself--he says that how men and women relate in the church and in the home gives a picture to the world of the gospel. Men give a picture of Christ by leading and laying down their lives for their wives

like Christ did the church; women give a picture of Christ in how they submit to and serve and bring glory to the man.<sup>9</sup>

So, that's question 2. It's not just a cultural thing; Paul ties it to created order and gospel demonstration.

I'm gonna do these last 2 questions together: 3–4

## 3–4. What's the deal with head coverings and how does that apply to us? (vv. 4–5)

Vs. 4. Paul's application of honoring male headship is to say **4 Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head. 5 Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head** (which in this context is the man), and that in turn dishonors Christ.

In those days, covering your head--whether by means of a veil--when I say "veil," don't think like a Muslim veil, but a shawl or a scarf, was a sign of femininity, modesty and respect. Historian Kyle Harper said, "Roman women in late antiquity were to be marked above all else by pudicitia (poo-dih-KIT-ia, Latin for "modesty"), and for a mature woman to wear her hair unveiled was one of the chief signs of sexual immodesty."<sup>10</sup>

**That was then, this is now. Is that still what it communicates?**

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<sup>9</sup> David Platt

<sup>10</sup> Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 2013), 41–42.



Let me teach you something really important about Bible interpretation, because you can go wrong in 1 of 2 ways with a passage like this. You can over-apply it or under-apply it.

Paul and other Bible writers will sometimes teach a timeless principle, and then encourage his readers, his first audience, to apply it in a culturally appropriate way. What makes sense in their context. The first way you can go wrong is to make their cultural expression normative for everyone. (That's over-applying). The other way you can go wrong is by failing to extract the timeless principle, and dismiss all of what the Bible writer is saying as cultural, applicable only to that one group. That's under-applying. The right thing to do is pull out the timeless principle and figure out what it looks like in your context.

**Let me use a different biblical example to help illustrate what I mean.** A few chapters later in this letter, **1 Corinthians 16:20**, Paul ends the letter with this command: **"Greet one another with a holy kiss."** In those days, kissing someone on both cheeks was the common way to show friendship, intimacy and warmth to the person you were meeting, particularly if they were family. Some cultures still do that, but that's not what we do today.

So, you could take that verse literally and insist on kissing every Christian you encounter, which will creep everybody out, get you fired off our greeting team and make you the kind of person everyone at this church avoids. Particularly in Omicron season. That's not a good thing to do with that verse.

Or, you might say, "Well, since greeting one another with kisses is just not what we do anymore, this verse doesn't apply to me." But then you'd fail to see the timeless principle that *does* apply to you: greet one another with the warmth and tenderness of family. The right thing to do is figure out the culturally appropriate way of expressing that principle in our day. For us, that's probably: Greet one another with a warm handshake, or a Covid-approved fist bump, or the patented Christian co-ed side-hug or the same gender Christian fists-in-the-back bro-hug. We are to take the unchanging principle of greeting each other like family and put it into the changing expressions of our culture.

**Got it? The same is true in this principle of head covering and long hair.** What communicates in our day what these things communicated in their day? **Well, what did head covering communicate in *that* day?**

**First, femininity.** Vs. 14, "Nature itself teaches you that men and women are different and thus should look different, and not try to look like each other. The point is not long or short hair; the point is every culture has things that distinguish men and women and we should not blur those.

- In Corinth, men didn't have long hair unless they were trying to cross-dress, and women didn't have short hair unless they were trying to look like men! And so Paul said, "Don't do that."
- **That was their culture. But that's no longer true in ours.** I mean, there's nothing about this **(pic)** that screams femininity to me. It screams a lot of things, but femininity is not one of them. I mean, the cape, the Chuck Taylor's, the goatee and hair... if that all doesn't scream "young, strapping man," I don't know what does.

- **So the question is:** What does dressing in gender-appropriate ways that honor the distinctions of nature look like in our culture? Well, probably it would mean men not wearing skirts. Unless you're listening in from Scotland and that's common there. If you're a guy it's probably safe to say you shouldn't be wearing midriff blouses with lace and sequins and mom-jeans. You shouldn't dress like **David on Schitt's Creek** (that's S-C-H-I-T-T-S); God made you a man; dress like a man. What that looks like changes from place to place, and even within cultures. 50 years ago a man with an earring may have indicated looking feminine, but that's not true anymore. 50 years ago a woman with a tattoo might have been masculine, but that's not true anymore.
- I love what **Kevin DeYoung** says about this passage: **"(However we apply this passage), we can assert, without equivocation, that God wants men to look like men and women to look like women, though what that physically looks like will vary from time to time and place to place... The Bible here affirms an essential truth no longer obvious in our day—it is disgraceful for a man to appear to be a woman and a woman to appear to be a man."**
- It's dishonoring to God to do things that mask or confuse your gender.<sup>11</sup>

So first, men in every culture should look like men and women should look like women. **Second, when women lead and teach in the church, they should do so in ways that demonstrate, not attempt to subvert, God's order.**

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<sup>11</sup> From Andrew Wilson. For more on this, see ["Five Things Every Christian Should Know About the Transgender Debate,"](#) by Andrew T. Walker;

**Like I said, here at the TSC** we believe that women have access to all the spiritual gifts men do—including teaching and leading—and that they can and should (they must!) develop them for use in the body of Christ, at the highest levels.

We have women that lead teams here, teach, speak into decision-making, cast vision, baptize, lead in communion, and just about everything else.

But we believe, based on this chapter and 1 Timothy 2, that they can and should do so in a way that shows they respect the order that God has established. Having a woman wear a head covering when she's on stage no longer communicates that respect like it did in Corinth, BUT—this is the reason, for example, we don't, at least for now, have women give the main message on Sunday morning—because in our context people assume that the one who does that on Sunday morning is the elder/pastor.

**That's not to say women don't have a lot to say in the church:** Some of the people I learn from most in the body of Christ are women-- Elisabeth Elliot, Jen Wilkin, Elise Fitzpatrick, Beth Moore, Hannah Anderson, Rosaria Butterfield, Rebecca McLaughlin, Jackie Hill Perry—not to mention the women on staff here that I've gotten to work with over the years, like Bonnie Shrum or Lori Frances or Lesley Hildreth or Amy Whitfield, and many others--and sometimes I want to bring them on stage and have them share with you directly instead of me just quoting them. But you'll notice that we've chosen to keep me or another pastor on stage when they are here. That's not because we

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[Transgender](#), by Vaughan Roberts, and [Understanding Gender Dysphoria](#), by Mark Yarhouse.

don't trust them or they're not capable--far from it--we just know that in our culture being alone in this spot communicates pastor/elder, and what we communicate is important.<sup>12</sup> Karen Swallow Prior (literature professor over at SEBTS) said that Christ's headship over the church is reflected metaphorically in men being the primary deliverers of the word to the church in the capacity of pastor/elder.

That's a biblical distinction we want to honor because the Apostle said in 1 Corinthians 11 that not to do so was *dishonoring* to God.

There are other ways a woman can communicate this submission and respect for divine order-like wearing a wedding ring; taking her husband's last name; how she dresses--these can all be symbols that she recognizes and respects the order that God has set up in the church.

Now, I know some of you hearing this might say that people are gonna say that we are on the wrong side of history with all this. I get it, but I made up my mind long ago that it's more important to be on the right side of the Bible than it is the right side of our culture's shifting view of history. This wise man builds his house upon the rock of God's word, not the shifting sands of cultural opinion. You go ahead and be on the right side of history; I'm going to stay on the right side of Jesus. Amen?

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<sup>12</sup> Karen Swallow Prior argues that the church is healthier when it supports women growing and developing as teachers and leaders. But she does have this quote: "I am not talking about women preaching or being pastors.... One reason I'm a Southern Baptist is because I believe deeply in the significance and meaning of God creating humans as male and female. I don't know any

### **I love Andrew Wilson's conclusion of this chapter:**

We have to strive to display these two facts:

- Men and women are different
- Men and women are of equal value

*Wilson says, If the way you're trying to show distinction actually degrades one gender, that's a failure. If the way you're trying to display equality actually erases any distinction, that's a failure too.*

That's what we strive to do. And we do so with the knowledge that God's word is good. His design is the best, even when it goes against culture, and we'd all do well to heed it.

And maybe the other thing I want to leave you with is this: ladies, we need you to sign up in leadership. Forgive us if we have ever implied here that what you bring is less important. We need a lot more women leading and being developed than we have. You can find out more by talking to the women's discipleship director at your campus.

church denomination that has embodied the symbolism of this reality perfectly, but the reality of Christ (who is the Word) being head (or source) of the church is reflected metaphorically in the appointment of men as the source for the delivery of the Word to the church." [Beth Moore left the SBC after the SBC left women to fend for themselves.](#)