

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXVIII: *Biblical Principles & Cultural Issues, Pt I*

TEXT: 1 COR. 10:31—11:16 (NLT)

10:31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. **32** Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles^[a] or the church of God. **33** I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. **11:1** And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

2 I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you. **3** But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.^[b] **4** A man dishonors his head^[c] if he covers his head while praying or prophesying. **5** But a woman dishonors her head^[d] if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head. **6** Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, she should wear a covering.^[e]

7 A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory. **8** For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. **9** And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man. **10** For this reason, and because the angels are watching, a woman should wear a covering on her head to show she is under authority.^[f] **11** But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. **12** For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.

13 Judge for yourselves. Is it right for a woman to pray to God in public without covering her head? **14** Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair? **15** And isn't long hair a woman's pride and joy? For it has been given to her as a covering. **16**

But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that we have no other custom than this, and neither do God's other churches.

a. Greek or Greeks.

b. Or to know: *The source of every man is Christ, the source of woman is man, and the source of Christ is God. Or to know: Every man is responsible to Christ, a woman is responsible to her husband, and Christ is responsible to God.*

c. Or dishonors Christ. d. *Corinthians 11:5 Or dishonors her husband.*

e. Or should have long hair. f, *Greek should have an authority on her head.*

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. The verses in this study (10:31—11:15) have been deliberately paired.

Q How do the closing verses of the 10th chapter help us to better understand Paul's concerns in the 11th?

2. Having just tackled the controversial matter of eating Pagan temple meat, Paul now takes on another heated issue in the early church: head coverings. Only a very small percentage of professing Christians wears head-coverings today, but the custom is still very much at home in Middle Eastern cultures.

Q What was the meaning and significance of head coverings to the 1st century world? Another way of putting it: if a woman was seen without her head covering what did that say of her?

Q Why do you suppose Paul was less dogmatic in confronting the meat issue, more dogmatic about head-coverings?

Q Do Paul's instructions here contradict the equality of the sexes he argued so passionately for in passages like Galatians 3:28?

Q Is it possible to make a distinction between the *principle* behind veils and the *custom*? Which would be considered binding on Christians in the 21st century?