

What does 1 Corinthians 11:5 mean about a woman's head being covered?

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

So many people today will not study this verse thoroughly or even study the whole content surrounding it in verses 1-16. Nor do they realize this appears to be actually referring to the men and women in a church setting...a service.

In addition this verse is not only concerning women that prophesy, but all women WHO PRAY!

There's more to this than the obvious assumption. 2 Timothy 2:15 says 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

I will not be voicing an opinion but simply laying out what I have found in my studies and ask you to take all these things to Jesus Christ in prayer.

Let's begin at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11 in Jesus Christ's name. Verse 2 is where our lovely Jesus Christ first began showing me this understanding.

1 Corinthians 11:1-2.

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

Definition of Ordinance: a piece of legislation enacted by a municipal authority; an authoritative order; a decree; a prescribed religious rite (rite means: a religious or other solemn ceremony or act: a body of customary observances characteristic of a Church or a part of it:)

Strong's definition: G3862 =Greek word 'paradosis' which means: (concretely) a precept; specially, the Jewish traditionary law:—ordinance, tradition.

Paul in 1 Corinthians is addressing the Corinthian church and in chapter 11 among others in the Word of God appears to be talking about a church service, a gathering where the holy scriptures are shared and worship occurs in Jesus Christ's name.

We see when he tells us to keep the ordinances he delivers to them...to us, the ordinances according to the Strong's definition appears to mean a precept. An order but in the tradition of their day.

Now that this is understood Lord willing I will break down the verses for clarity and understanding in Jesus Christ's name. Sweet Holy Spirit please teach us as John 14:26 says you will do.

Please remember as we start this that just as words today can mean different things in different circumstances, so does this occur in the translation of the Holy Bible and the Greek words themselves. To clarify I will be adding at times the Thayer's Greek Lexicon information also, Lord willing. All this information can be found at the www.blueletterbible.org site.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

The phrase 'the head' both times is the Greek word '*kephalē*' Strong's number G2726 and means : literally or figuratively:—head. In this verse it means figuratively.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: of a husband in relation to his wife, 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23; of Christ, the lord of the husband, 1 Corinthians 11:3 (cf. Buttman, 124f (109)); of the church, Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:19

To understand the meaning of whether a woman should have her head covered or uncovered when she prays and speaks prophetically, I feel one must know what the key phrases mean in 1 Corinthians 11:4-6. The phrases 'her head' and the word 'uncovered' among others. The word head can be figurative or literal. Some teach that the phrase 'her head' refers only to the woman's husband's authority over her. If she has a husband, then he is the head of his wife or her

authority. I agree. Because the man is the ordained head of his house and Jesus Christ is over the man and the church. (Ephesians 5:22-25)

But in this instance it appears in 1 Corinthians 11:4-6 this is not the English equivalent of the Greek word used here. I have found the Greek word for “head” is *kephale* and is the normal Greek word for the anatomical head that is supported by a person’s neck.

There are times in the Word of God the word *kephale* is used to refer to the chief or head cornerstone (Ps. 118:22, etc.) and a few times I have found so far that it refers to someone’s hair. (1 Corinthians 11:5; Mat 10:30, etc.) Otherwise, the word is used 69 times to refer to the anatomical “head” or “heads” in the New Testament. (Mat 5:36; 26:7; Act 18:18; Rom 12:20; 1Co 12:21; Rev 1:14; 9:17, etc.) That is, “her head” does not refer to her husband but to her own physical head in 1 Corinthians 5-6). Paul is discussing a woman covering her physical head... her hair!

1 Corinthians 11:4-6

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

In verse 4 the Greek word head is the Greek word ‘*kephalē*’ also. It’s Strong’s number G2726

Strong’s definition : literally or figuratively:—head.

In verse 5 in the Greek it’s the phrase ‘with [her] head and is the same Greek word ‘*kephalē*’ Strong’s number G2726 and same usage as verse 4 which means : literally or figuratively:—head.

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon: the head, both of men and often; and of animals in these verses: Matthew 5:36; Mark 6:24; Luke 7:38, 44 (Rec.), 46; John 13:9;

Acts 18:18; 1 Corinthians 11:4; Revelation 1:14; Revelation 4:4, and often; and of animals: Revelation 9:7, 17, 19, etc.;

In verse 5 the word dishonoureth is the Greek word *'kataischynō* ' G2617. \

Strong's definition: to shame down, i.e. disgrace or (by implication) put to the blush:—confound, dishonour, (be a-, make a-)shame(-d).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: to dishonor, disgrace: found in 1 Corinthians 11:5.

The word uncovered is the Greek word *akatakalyptos* Strong's number G177.

Strong's definition: uncovered-unveiled

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: not covered, unveiled: 1 Corinthians 11:5, 13.

The phrase 'she were shaven' is the Greek word *xyraō* Strong's number G3587 which is a derivative of the Greek word *xylon* (G3586)

Strong's definition: (meaning a razor); to shave or "shear" the hair:—shave.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

The word shorn in verse 6 is the Greek word *keirō* and is Strong's number G2751.

Strong's definition: to shear:—shear(-er).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: absolutely, of shearing or cutting short the hair of the head, 1 Corinthians 11:6

One can see from 1 Corinthians 11:5 that Paul is concerned about women whose heads are bald or shaved since he says, "with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." It is also important to notice that in verse 6 the Greek word that is translated as "cut off" is *keirō* which means "to shear or cut off."

We also see in Acts 8:32 the Greek word *keirō* is used of a “shearer” of a lamb. A shearer completely removes all of the lamb’s “hair.” Also, in verse 6 the Greek word for ‘shaved’ is *xyraō*. The word is a derivative, meaning it comes from the word *xylon* which means a ‘razor.’ In ancient times a razor was used to trim beards. By comparing these 2 Greek words and their meanings *keiro* with *xyrao* we discover that Paul is referring to a woman’s hair that has been completely cut off, as one shears sheep or her hair that has been cut and shortened by a razor.

Now let’s jump down, Lord willing to 1 Corinthians 11: 15.

In 1 Corinthians 11:15, Paul says that a woman’s long hair is the covering that God has given her and should be worn long.

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

The Greek word for glory is *doxa* Strongs number G1391.

Strong’s definition: glory (as very apparent), in a wide application (literal or figurative, objective or subjective):—dignity, glory(-ious), honour, praise, worship.

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon:to be a glory, ornament, to one, 1 Corinthians 11:15;

In verse 15 the phrase ‘have long hair’ is the Greek word *komaō*.

Strong’s definition: to wear tresses of hair:—have long hair.

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon to let the hair grow, have long hair: 1 Corinthians 11:14

A woman’s long hair is her glory....her dignity...her honor. Therefore, Paul’s reference to uncovered women’s heads being a dishonor or a shame to them appears to refer to hair that is very short or bald. This is supported by the Greek word for ‘long hair’ in verse 15 which is *komaō*. This word refers to hair that is long and not cut short.

This would also mean that Paul is encouraging all the women to show submission by wearing their hair long, that her long hair is her covering. [verses 4, 5, 6] If the glory and honor is the woman's hair and it's called their covering, it appears the dishonoring, the shame and the uncovering of the woman's hair mentioned in verse 5 is in the cutting of her long hair or shaving her head. This also appears to mean a woman should not have her hair cut short as men typically wear their hair. What the typical hair length was for a man in biblical days I do not know. That would be for another study Lord willing.

Paul's discussion continues until verse 16 in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. In this last verse he makes an important statement that this is a universal and divine principle that all of the churches are to follow.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

This means in my understanding, if anyone wants to be contentious (argumentative), they are arguing against this common practice among the churches. The fact that Paul is saying, "All of the other churches are following this custom or habit."

Let me say this, I have been in mighty services of God when the Holy Spirit would be moving and a prophetic word would come forth from men and women alike because God has no respect of persons. (Romans 2:11) Not once did I witness a woman under the power of the Holy Spirit stop to cover her head before the holy word came forth and these words given under the power of the Holy Spirit that 'did' prove true at a later time.

At other times, in the church I grew up in, the women and men would gather at the altar and aid in praying for a lost soul to be saved and that person would accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior...with the women's heads uncovered and without a veil. Not to mention praying for someone to be healed..and they were healed! So, you be the judge. We are to watch the fruit of each person's life. (Matthew 7:16-23)

In the end we are all equal in our God's eyes, but the male and female bodies have some differences in our creation because the woman was taken out of the man's ribs. But when we are called to work for our lovely Jesus Christ....

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

Please pray about all this information and ask Jesus Christ to reveal his truth to you.

Thank you and God bless.

Vicki Goforth Parnell
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