

Headcovering

WHY IT'S A BIBLICALLY SOUND
TEACHING EVEN TO THIS DAY



The war against headcovering

Some years ago when I began to wear a head covering, I was surprised by the harsh and strange reactions that it brought. Never in my life would I have imagined that a piece of fabric could stir up so many emotions and arguments.

There is so much to say about this subject. I hope I'll be able to put all of my thoughts down in an understandable way, to show you what my husband and I have discovered in the Bible during this head covering journey. Also, throughout this text, I will leave some questions for you to carry with you in your continued search for answers.

I also want to mention before we dive into it, I absolutely understand if not everyone sees what I see. If you don't agree, I respect your feelings. However, I do ask and desire that you to have an open mind, heart, and eyes concerning this subject. I ask this because oftentimes it seems we have already made up our minds about subjects like this.



I truly believe wearing a head covering is such a blessing! Even if people don't accept it, I know our Heavenly Father does. I hope this little text can be a blessing for you, to give you understanding or encouragement in your own walk in the area of head covering.

Viktoria



What headcovering isn't!

We need to go through this first.

Before I even present the matters of the Bible and how they are stated therein, we first need to make this clear. What the head covering isn't.

Why do I start with this? Well, because many people have a lot of different ideas about why Christians wear head coverings, which I totally understand since it's not a common practice of today. I understand there is assumptions possibly because of other people's statements about it or maybe even your own thoughts have made it into something it's not. So I think it is important to address this before we start to dig deeper.

Salvational issue

If you think women who are practicing head covering do it because of their salvation- this is one of the false accusations that makes it difficult to see the whole picture. It is clearly NOT a salvational practice, but more of a practice that comes because you believe, an outward sign of what has happened on the inside you could say. It is an act of faith because we already believe. So the practice of head covering has nothing to do with your salvation. If you don't head cover, it won't put your salvation at stake.

Pride

The assumption that women cover their heads because of pride, and because they think they are better than all the other Christians is also a wrong view. Wearing a head covering has nothing to do with pride. Women don't use it to display to everyone just how good of a Christian they are. We will dig deeper into this later on and you will (hopefully) clearly see that pride is the total opposite of what head covering truly is.

God doesn't hear your prayers

Another assumption about women who wear a head covering is they think their prayers won't be heard or answered if they don't wear it. This is also a false assumption. Of course God can hear our prayer without it, and of course He answers our prayers if we don't use it. God's goodness and faithfulness doesn't depend upon our head covering. I will also explain this view in greater detail further on, but I don't believe anyone who wears a head covering for the biblical reasons have this belief. Furthermore, we see that out in the world, as a witness to this, many women have their prayers answered without wearing a head covering. So being without a head covering isn't something that in any way hinders God's power.

Where is it found?

The Bible gives us the instruction

Before we can start digging deeper we need to take a look at the passage where this practice of headcovering is stated. If we take a look at 1 Corinthians 11 we find:



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. **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. **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. **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. **7** For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. **8** For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. **9** Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. **10** For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. **11** Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. **12** For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. **13** Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? **14** Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? **15** But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. **16** But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Here we have it, the passage that is both hated and loved. A passage that stirs up a lot of emotions, attitudes, as well as many other things. And I understand, it is a lot to take in and to make sense of, but we will take it step by step so you can follow along.

The main focus in the chapter

1 Cor. 11:4-5

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

Here we are given the instruction that a man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying dishonoureth his head, and every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered brings dishonour to her head. Here Paul is talking about both the physical head and the headship in God's ordained order. In the verses before, we are told that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. So when we then read about the covering of the head, Paul is talking about the physical head that needs to be uncovered for a man and covered for a woman, but it is because of a non-physical reason. By not following this we are dishonouring our non-physical head; for women the man, and for men who covers, Christ.

One thing that is important to note here is the fact that the men also have a guideline for what is proper and what is not proper when they pray or prophesy. This scripture is not only for women. Even if we put more focus on the instructions for women, you can keep in mind that there are directions here for the men too. So, if someone says it is degrading for women and only the women are being corrected and "pushed on" they are wrong! This scripture is towards the men as well.



Let's now move on to some of the reasons people don't think head covering is a practice we should apply today. This will help us to dive deeper into the passage, and I will explain more about every section of it.

Is it about the hair?

Hair as the covering

"...for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 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."

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

The two passages above are often mentioned in correlation with the belief that the hair is the covering. Therefore, those who hold this belief say we don't need to wear an extra physical cloth upon our heads.

However, if we really look into this matter, could the hair really be the covering this scripture advocates for? Sure, the hair is mentioned as a covering in verse fifteen, but how can we be sure it is an external covering? Well, the hair is a woman's glory and therefore it is given as a natural covering. With this in mind, let's remember verse ten where it talks about the angels. It says that, "Therefore the woman ought to have power on her head because of the angels." So, the hair is a woman's glory, not a power.

If we continue, or rather go to the beginning, we find an important detail in verse four on how Paul is guiding the men in this area. He writes that they should not cover their head when praying or prophesying, if it would refer to the hair, that would mean that every man praying or prophesying wouldn't be allowed to have any hair upon their head. With that in mind it is pretty clear that it is not meant that the hair is the covering.

We also find an interesting detail in verse six: *"For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn..."* If the covering referred to the hair, we could actually replace the word covering with the word hair and see if it makes sense. *For if the woman be not with **hair**, let her **also** be **shorn**...* So that would mean that if you do not have hair, you also have to shave it. Doesn't make sense, right?



Culture or not?

One of the most common arguments on why head covering isn't for women today is that it would be a cultural issue, only concerning the people in Corinth. But here we bump into several issues. If the letter to the church in Corinth was only for them, we'd miss out on a lot of writings that are very much used today, such as the Lord's Supper, revelation about what love is, and so on. Paul even starts the letter by addressing all churches of God, not only Corinth.

But what if this passage was referring to culture, how would that actually fit into the head covering passage?

Well, if we look at the reasons why a woman should wear a head covering:

- Otherwise she is dishonouring her head (not physical head but her man, Christ and God)
- Because a woman is the glory of man
- Because the woman was created for the man
- Because of the angels
- Because of nature itself

So if we sum up all of these reasons, where do we land? We find that it is referring to headship, too creation, to the angels and to nature. All of the reasons above are pointing to everything but culture. It has no reference to culture, but has everything to do with the spiritual realm, and to creation itself. So, if you're making it into a cultural matter that is absolutely a step in the wrong direction. According to the Bible we are supposed to compare spiritual things with spiritual things. So, how can we in this specific case start to compare spiritual matters to cultural matters? Well, if we want to explain it away it would be logical. But even if we would make it a cultural matter we'd lose the argument, because all throughout history women have been applying this teaching. It wasn't until within the last century or so that things began to change. Women started to break free from their homes and the God given order to choose to walk the path of liberty and self-empowerment.



Is it legalistic?

I think this is the most common view from other Christians; wearing a head covering is being legalistic about your faith.

I can understand where people are coming from, because generally in today's society no one wants to fall into this ditch. Many times it has been over used to make God's word a little bit less sharp and true. But how is it then that the practice of head covering became a legalistic practice?

Well, it's not. But why?

Head covering is a practice based on humility, and is an act of obedience because of our faith. It isn't something that we have to do to be saved and it isn't something that we are making our own rules about.

Sure, it could become legalistic if we start writing our own rules about it other than what is written. If we, for example, only accepted one kind of fabric to wear, or only accepted one kind of color, or one way to wear it- then it would start to touch on this legalistic border. If we were to take it one step further from this, we would start telling people they can't get saved without it or that God doesn't hear our prayers without it. *Then* we would have gone into the area of legalism. Although in all honesty, people can twist and turn every sound teaching in the Bible to make it into a legalistic teaching. We should be very careful using that term, it has been very misused, especially nowadays. The assumption of legalistic teaching keeps people in fear and bondage, just as much as the legalistic way of living.

Being legalistic about a teaching of the Bible is when we depend on it for our salvation or/and make our own rules towards that subject. It is NOT to simply follow what is written in humility.



Because of the angels

Now I want to take a look at this verse: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."

I believe this verse is the one that is usually the hardest to understand: because of the angels the woman is supposed to have a power on her head. It means that one of the purposes for practicing head covering is beyond our measures, and it has more spiritual significance than we can ever understand. I believe there are many possible reasons why it is important for the angels, but it is absolutely something that we should take very serious. We should not neglect it because we may lack the understanding of it. There are so many aspects of this verse we could dive into, but I will focus on just a few for now.

Usually when we are taught about covering because of the angels, it mostly refers to Genesis when the angels came down and saw that the women were fair and had company with them. The connection here with head covering is that the angels can be tempted by women and therefore we should cover our head so we don't bring lustful temptations to the angels. I think this could be a part of the matter but as we read in the context of the passage in 1 Corinthians, the head covering is mainly to bring honor to our husband, Christ and God. If this then, is a spiritual matter to have in mind I do think there is more to it than being sensual and tempting when you are without a head covering.

We probably cannot fully understand how the spiritual realm is working, but what we do know is that the angels are present, and they are watching us. If we are told to cover our heads because of the angels, the covering has to have a purpose to it. Maybe to show the spiritual realm that we are under our husband, under a greater authority, or that we are humble about our role. I believe one of the greatest purposes is because we are suppose to cover when praying and prophesying. Why is it so important in those situations? Maybe because the angels are present? Well, I don't have a clear answer, but the thing I do know is that it is of importance for the angels, and therefore probably partly beyond our knowledge and understanding as well.

Judge in yourselves

In verse 13 we find this text: *“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?”*

This verse has often been wrongly used in this context, many think that by this statement from Paul we are free to do whatever we in ourselves believe is comely (proper/fitting) or not. But if we read further, Paul is making a reference to nature and the hair, comparing nature with how natural it should be to pray with a covering on a woman’s head. It should be as natural as short hair on men and long hair on women (which is another topic for itself). So to take that verse to defend the own opinion about head covering doesn’t make sense because it is not talking about the free will to choose, but showing that it should be natural to choose this ordinance given to the church.

If we continue to verse sixteen it says: *“But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.”*

This is also used by Christians in the same way as verse thirteen. Some say this verse states the fact that we don’t argue about it and therefore it’s up to each and every person to make a personal choice about it. Firstly, why would Paul use several verses to explain something that he, in the end, doesn’t find important?

In context of this verse, the meaning is *this absolutely is not something that we should argue about, because the Corinthian church including other churches of God do not have the custom of arguing.* It is not talking about the custom of head covering but the custom of being contentious. So to take these two verses to make it into a cultural matter or just a personal matter is actually not biblical, and is all about making a teaching outside of the context.

We also do see in the very beginning of the chapter that this isn’t Pauls personal teaching, but he is reminding fellow believers that he is a follower of Christ and that the church (all churches as it is stated in the beginning of the letter) should keep the ordinances as he delivers them to them. An ordinance isn’t just a “do as you please” expression. If you look in old english dictionaries an ordinance is usually stated as law, a command, or even more specifically a law/rule by an authority. That doesn’t seem so flexible to me. So, I really do believe this is something we should be openminded about as we are make our way through this chapter.

Only for the church of Corinth?

To continue a little bit further in the same area, I want to touch on the statement that the teaching of head covering was only a practice for the Corinthian church.

You could find a lot of different “historical stories” about this text, stories which don’t have a biblical foundation to make sense out of it.

What then does the Bible say about this? Since it is only stated very specifically in this passage in the Bible people are very confused about it. I guess when you see it that way, it is easy to believe that it is written to only that specific church. But let’s take a closer look at it.

In the beginning of the letter Paul writes: **1** Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, **2** Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: **3** Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if we look at this text: ***“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”***, we can absolutely see that it is for the Christians in the church of Corinth. But if we continue we read: ***“with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”***, which shows us that it is ALSO to them who in every place call upon Jesus. This makes it is very clear that this letter isn’t only for the believers of Corinth.

If we continue, we come upon the eleventh chapter where head covering is written about it. Many people say that something is unique happening in Corinth because Paul is saying keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto YOU. This reasoning doesn’t make sense because, in the same chapter we also have the text about communion. If the ordinances in chapter eleven were only given to the church of Corinth, then we wouldn’t bother about communion either, right? But head covering and communion are stated in the same chapter, with the same level of seriousness and importance. If we would neglect the teaching of head covering we could also neglect the part after it as well. But no one does, right?

Why so much feelings about it?

Why then is this such a sensitive topic to talk about? Why do people become so angry and so emotional about this? Well, simply put, because they usually don't want to do it.

For so many years now head covering has been explained away as a non-biblical teaching or as something only for that time in that church, but not for us today. One reasons why head covering has been almost deleted from today's churches is just the basic fact that women nowadays don't want to be under their husbands authority. Feminism has liberated women, telling them to stand strong in themselves and not to depend on anyone else. No one should put a woman in oppression or in some dominating chains. Now you might think I went a little bit over the top but the truth is, that is where the foundational problem lies.

In today's society people, including Christians, are so impacted by feminism that they can't even see it anymore. I mean, so much biblical wisdom has been taken away from us today. Our teachings about motherhood, a woman taking care of the house, the children, her husband, serving her husband, being humble, meek, modest, quiet and so on...how much of this is being shouted out in the churches today as something good and edifying? No, today it is (generally) talked about with shame and embarrassment, something from a time when women didn't have any value. However, many with this view miss the whole point, that was a time when women were very much valued and needed, in their home, in their families and as a help for their husbands.

Nowadays when more women are leaders, pastors, elders and so on, the men are taking a step back letting the women take over with their non-given leadership. This causes many to have to change their theological view, mixing it with some stories to explain the truth away so the women of today don't have to submit to a man or authority. I know this sounds hard, and maybe absurd but it is what is happening in our society, God's order and Word is being degraded to people's personal views. This is why I believe head covering is such a hard topic to even talk about. People don't want to have this practice. Some are unlearned, but many are being willingly ignorant. And sure, it isn't a salvational issue but it is a heart issue.

If people are getting offended by a small piece of fabric upon someones head, something has gone very wrong in Christianity today. So even if you don't agree with the teaching, please still stay humble and kind towards those who choose to do it.

The true why

So, with all of the different texts we have looked at, what is the true purpose to cover your head?

Head covering has nothing to do with being a better Christian than someone else. It has nothing to do with pride or such a mindset. However, head covering does have to do with modesty and with behaving in a proper manner. The main reasons for wearing a head covering is submission. Submission to your own authority, submission unto Christ, submission unto God. It is an outward sign of an inward humbleness towards your husband, Christ and God. It is a sign that you are following the order that God has ordained in the family. It shows that you are under a higher authority. It is also of course because of the angels as we already have read.

Wearing a head covering isn't something that will lead you on a shortcut to Heaven, it isn't something that will save you, it isn't something that makes your prayers work better, BUT it is a sign of submission.

Many might think that it isn't something that really matters, but you know something, the war that starts when you begin wearing a head covering, isn't a game. It stirs up so much that you could never imagine would ever happen. But if you go the way of head covering, God will give you strength to endure all the spiritual warfare that will try to end your practice. And if a piece of fabric could stir up what I have seen during my years of using a head covering, I could never say anything else than this: It is important.

It is important for so many reasons I don't even understand, but I really encourage you to look into this yourself, do it with an open mind and heart, and let God show you all that you need to see about it.



How and when?

So, now we have come to the part that actually is very individual, how and when we should cover. As the text says a woman should cover when praying and prophesying and that is probably very clear, right?

But think about certain aspects of this, we could pray or prophesy in songs, in communications, on the street or whenever, in different ways. So this isn't a practice specifically locked to gatherings, to church or when only men are in the gathering. It could apply to whenever or wherever.

Many are using the head covering only when gathered together with other men, and this is because it could bring temptations or distractions because of a woman's beautiful appearance. However, as we read previously, this is not the main reason to why a head covering is worn, it is to honor the spiritual head and because of the angels. So everywhere that prayer or prophecy is practiced, head covering should be practiced also.

You don't have to wear the head covering all the time if you don't want to, but consider always having it on hand and ready to be used. Another personal aspect of head covering could be modesty, you want to cover your hair because you don't want to bring attention to your glory, to your beauty. This reason is also totally fine and non-legalistic, it is never wrong to have the will to be modest. If we think about it, how many commercials use a woman with beautiful, long flowing hair to make their product sell even better? So, there is the motive of being modest even if this might not be the main purpose of it.

Why do I cover all the time? Well, I chose to do it at all times from the very beginning of my journey because I was unsure about what was right. Then I realized how extremely vain I was, and kept it on at all times just to take away the vanity. But what kept me covered all the time was because the Bible tells us to pray without ceasing and to always be in prayer. Those scriptures along with the verse that tells us to not stand on the street praying so that everyone sees us has helped me to make a choice about when. If I should be praying throughout the day, but not for everyone to see me hypocritically praying- if I were to put on a covering in public just to pray, wouldn't that be that very thing? Almost shouting out - Now I'm praying everyone! So, this is one of the reasons why I chose to do it all times. Now I'm so used to it that having a covering is nowadays a part of my regular clothing. I can be at home without one (not that I go around without clothing as something normal haha!) but usually I wear it all the time.

How then should you cover?

Well, the instruction we get in Corinthians is to cover your head. How you do it is not as important as the instruction itself, but if you come before the Lord praying with a lace headband, that is just stretching the practice of covering. If it's see-through it is not doing its job covering you, and if it's just a small string of fabric it isn't covering your head. Apart from that, feel free to use whatever covering works best. As with clothes, there are different fabrics, colors and patterns you can use so you can be as creative as you want. BUT be careful to not turn it into some kind of fashion show. You cover because of humility towards your God, not to make everyone see how beautiful you are. Remember the purpose and the why, so you don't turn to a road of vanity and forget about the real matter of the practice.

Conclusion

Is it a practice for today?

Well, from all the passages we have been looking at, I think it is without question a practice for today.

The main reason is of course that it isn't a cultural matter since all of the reasons are pointing to the headship, the creation and the angels, which are not related to culture.

If someone want's to point to the fact it isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, we can actually see it is backed up by headship, which is mentioned several times, it is backed up by creation and it is backed up by the existence of the angels which are also mentioned in many places. So even though this text isn't written in the same way somewhere else, it doesn't make it less valid. It refers to so many other things that are mentioned in several ways in other places.

We need to read the Bible with the mindset that it will explain itself. We can always find answers in the Bible for verses or passages that might seem hard to understand. God has put them in there for us to see, if we search for it. So trust that you also can always find the truth in scripture. God has His ways to reveal His ways in His Word.

What I do want you to do is your own research about this matter as well. As I said before, this is a heart issue and we need to let God change us if we are being prideful about this teaching. I don't say that you are prideful if you don't practice head covering, but oftentimes people reject this teaching because of that very reason. Make sure you're not being prideful about it, but rather searching for truth. Pray that God will show you how he wants it to be. That is all that really matters in the end, right?



I really hope that this text has been helpful in the head covering dilemma, and that it can be a blessing for you in your walk with the Lord.

Seek Him, and please only Him.

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