1 CORINTHIANS
11:1-16 | STUDY GUIDE

Head Covering

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-3, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ… But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." (ESV)

- One of the most widely disagreed upon passages of Scripture
  - Must keep perspective in mind
    - Verse ⟶passage ⟶book ⟶ canon
- Head = κεφαλή
  - Authority/Leader or Source/Origin?
  - Septuagint suggests "source/origin" a more likely translation
- Aristotle: Greek belief that the source of life is in the semen, which comes from a man's brain
- Alcmaeon of Croton, Aristotle & Plato
- Even Greek mythology demonstrates this; the goddess Athena is said to have "sprung from Zeus' head" and the Romans were known to refer to sexual intercourse as "diminishing one's head"
  - Headwaters
    - Bearded man or bull
- Paul's organization not a flowchart
  - Cyril of Alexandria
    - Man was made through God
    - Woman was taken out of man
    - "Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

1 CORINTHIANS
11:1-16 | STUDY GUIDE

- "Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:23, ESV)

- The Trinity
  - "…the head of Christ is God."
    - If we start reading "authority" into "head" we get into some tricky theological questions and risk distorting the Trinity

1 CORINTHIANS 11:4-5, "Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven." (ESV)

- We have to once again consider that this is a letter
  - The church at Corinth was navigating locally specific issues
    - Social status and sexual innuendo
- "For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. "(1 Corinthians 11:6, ESV)
- Paul's words are intended to edify and dignify
  - The expectation is that BOTH will pray and prophesy

1 CORINTHIANS 11:7, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man." (ESV)

- More than a "hair code"
- "δέ" = conjunction
  - And/also rather than "but"
  - 4th century church father, Ambrosiaster, denies imago Dei
- 11:10, "That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."

1 CORINTHIANS
11:1-16 | STUDY GUIDE

- More recent scholarship has argued for translation of "messenger"
  - Galatians 2:4 refers to "spies"

1 CORINTHIANS 11:11-12, "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God." (ESV)

- Once again, the purpose is unity
- 11:16, "If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God." (ESV)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Loren Cunningham & David Joel Hamilton, Why Not Women?, Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, Timothy Brookins, Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy, N.T. Wright, The New Testament in Its World