



What is the point?

Why does Paul mention the long hair as a woman's covering? The answer is found in examining the text as a whole. Paul gives several reasons in the passage for a woman to be covered. He states that she should be covered *because* (1) if she is not it is likened to having her head shaved, (2) she is the glory of the man and the man is the glory of God, (3) of the order of creation—woman was created after man, (4) of the angels. There is however an additional reason for a woman to be covered and not a man, and this reason is found in nature. In other words, the argument from nature in verses 14-15 is an argument in favor of the covering of the previous verses. It is yet another reason why the woman and not the man should be

covered. Paul is telling us that when we look to nature we can see which party (male or female) has the natural God-given covering. There is an intuitive knowledge in humanity that women are to have longer hair than men. This should reveal to us that when it comes to praying and prophesying it is the woman that should be covered and not the man.

Much more could be written on this topic, but hopefully this short treatise will help others. It is my conviction that women should have long hair and that they should also cover their head with a veil or scarf when they pray or prophesy. This appears to be the most consistent and harmonious interpretation of the text as a whole.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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First Corinthians 11:1-16



*Should a Woman
Cover Her Head?*

● ● ● | Veil or Long Hair?

I remember the first time I began to study First Corinthians 11. What was it really teaching? Was it saying that women could not cut their hair at all? Was it saying



Should a woman be covered in prayer?
1 Corinthians 11:13

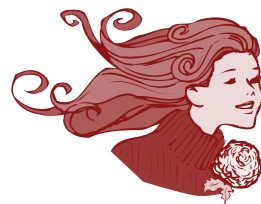
that a woman had to wear a veil? Was it only teaching that a wife should be subject to her husband? Or (as one man claimed) was the passage even authentic Scripture? So many questions plagued my mind and so few answers came. What I decided to do was to sit down and study the passage for myself, and let the passage speak for itself. Instead of trying to come to the text *with* a doctrine I wanted to establish my doctrine *after* reading and studying the text. I can't tell you how many times I have had difficult questions answered by following this method.

Praying or prophesying

I soon came to the conclusion that the passage was speaking of an artificial covering for women, other than their hair. One of the most revealing ways this came about was through the time period mentioned in verses 4-5 and 13. The text says that a man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but the opposite is true for the woman. If she prays or prophesies without covering her head, she dishonors her head. A person's natural hair is not regulated to a time period. Hair is no "put-on-able" and "take-off-able." If I tell my daughter to make sure she covers her head when she goes outside she would automatically understand that I'm talking about an artificial covering. Why? Because I stated a time period—when she goes outside.

Hair as a covering

As I continued to study I noticed that although there were usually two sides on the issue arguing that their understanding was true contrary to the other, the passage seemed to indicate that two coverings were in view for the woman. Verse 15 of the chapter states that if a woman has long hair it is a glory to her, for her hair is given to her for a covering. Many Bible translations state this last part as "for her hair is given



If a woman have long hair
it is a glory to her.
1 Corinthians 11:15

to her as a covering." I believe this is the proper understanding of the verse. A woman's long hair is her natural God-given covering and she should indeed have this covering (long hair). However, this covering is a permanent covering. A woman does not only have long hair when she prays and prophesies; she has (or should have) long hair every single minute of every single day. On top of this assessment we find that the Greek text of the passage uses two completely different Greek words for the covering mentioned in verses 4-13 and the covering mentioned in verses 14-15. Apostle Paul saw fit to describe the first covering (the one a woman should have while praying or prophesying) with the word *katakalypto*, while he used the Greek word *peribolaion* to describe the long hair covering of verse 15. Why the two completely different words? I am persuaded that it is because two different coverings are being taught in the text. One a veil or head scarf, the other long hair. One done at certain times, the other done at all times.