

What’s the Problem?

A solution without a problem makes no sense

1 Corinthians is like listening to one side of a phone conversation. You have to figure out the other side.

Reconstructing the issue in the Corinthian church

David Garland: Paul was dealing with a “serious breach in decorum.” Women were speaking out of turn, interrupting both men and their husbands. This is obviously disruptive in any setting. On top of that, there were “secret cults” that permeated the Roman Empire that were a “threat to public order and decency.” Paul didn’t want Christians associated with either of these things – disrespect between the sexes, or cultish activity. So, he points them to *tradition*, which is, at this point, the practice of the churches in Israel and Palestine where they had much stricter gender roles.

1 Corinthians 14:34 “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.”

Order

Leaders and followers

Everyone has a leader, except God the Father

The Father is the head of the Son
Christ is the head of man
Man is the head of woman

Every leader is a follower!

The nature of sin

Opposing authority

2 Thessalonians 2:2-4 “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”

2 Thessalonians 2:7 “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.”

“This is more of a male problem than a female problem, usually!” – Pastor Brian

Jesus himself was in submission

The greatest leader ever was a servant of all. And this is how Christianity fundamentally transforms competitive relationships into cooperative ones.

Gospel Witness

Appearances matter

Paul is concerned with what unbelievers think when they enter the church.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

1 Corinthians 14:23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

A possibility for vs. 10... “Because of the angels” referring to Roman spies investigating the church

Shaved heads and head coverings

Shaving the head of a woman was a public humiliation for adultery.

Upstanding Corinthian women wore their hair up, not down.

A good possibility is that the hair worn in an “up” position itself was considered a head covering. (v. 15)

Honor

Concern for Honor

Dishonor in verses 4,5

Disgrace in verse 6, 14

Humans are made for honor

Psalm 8:4-5 “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.”

Act honorably, honor others

Romans 12:10 “Outdo one another in showing honor.”

1 Timothy 2:2 “[Pray...] that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

Questions for Personal Study

1. In your own words, can you describe the situation that made Paul write this chapter?
2. Why is order important? How does disorder affect family, business, church, government, etc.?
3. What was going on with the head covering issue?
4. How can you show honor to others? Is there any way you are behaving dishonorably that you need to change?