

# Honouring our head

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today we continue on in our series in 1 Corinthians. We hit 1 Corinthians chapter 11 today and I highly recommend that today you actually use your sermon outline. It's kind of in the second half of this paper that you gave, this handout that you were given as you came in.

As you can probably tell, today's passage would need quite a bit of navigation and I think the handout will help you to navigate your way through so that you don't get lost.

So even if you don't normally use the outline, I recommend that you do so today. But the most important thing of course is to make sure the Bible is open in front of you.

I know Elder Kenny has already prayed for me, thank you for that, but it doesn't do any harm to pray some more, isn't it, for illumination.

So let's ask God again for his help. Father, indeed, please take your word today. Please plant it deep in us.

[ 1 : 02 ] Please help us to listen to it carefully so that we might be able to see your authority, to see your goodness, to see your grace, and so that we might live to your glory.

Help me to be careful in treating your words and help me to be able to communicate it with clarity and with faithfulness.

And help me to just allow your Holy Spirit to do your work in the way that you wish. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Now when it was first settled that we would be preaching our way through the second half of 1 Corinthians, the first thing I did was to circle 13 March on the calendar.

That's today if you didn't realise that. Why? Because that's when I knew I would be preaching 1 Corinthians 11 verse 2 to 16. This, as you probably worked out, is the most difficult passage in this book.

[ 2 : 09 ] Why is it difficult? Well, for one thing, it is honestly difficult to interpret. One commentator suggests that there are at least 22 debatable issues related to the meaning of this passage.

Now, I don't know if there are 22, but there are certainly quite a few, that's for sure. For one thing, what in the world is all this stuff to do with covering and uncovering your head? And actually, Paul seems to be speaking about headship in rather confusing ways.

What does he mean by head exactly? And just, what is all that stuff about men and women and whose glory is whose? And verse 10, why does he drop in mention of the angels out of nowhere?

Or that stuff about hair and nature right at the end? And this passage is difficult to interpret. And this passage is difficult to apply.

I think this works out in two ways. It's difficult to apply, first of all, because as we said already, it's difficult to understand. And so parts of the passage naturally remain obscure to us today.

[ 3 : 17 ] After all, what significance does head coverings have for my Christian life now? And am I supposed to take this as a direct command? Are the women really supposed to cover their heads this morning?

But I think it's also difficult to apply because, second of all, actually, this passage touches on some very sensitive contemporary issues.

Even if we can't make much sense of it right now, I think we can tell that somehow this passage touches on the issue of gender. And some of these verses don't sit well with us.

When we read verse 9, for example, neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. Now that could potentially trigger some strong emotions in some of us.

On the face of it, it feels offensive, oppressive, even unsafe. And we should acknowledge that. And so this passage is difficult.

[ 4 : 18 ] And I have to admit, it was certainly tempting for me to just skip and leave this passage out altogether. But here's what happens when a church is committed to a primary diet of sequential, expository preaching.

It forces us to deal with the hard passages of Scripture, not just the bits that we like or are easy to understand. And I think getting up close and personal with a passage like 1 Corinthians 11, verse 2 to 16 is actually good for us.

Because it provides us with a good test of how we view the Bible. We all say that we believe the Bible is God's word. But when faced with a passage like this, do we still believe that?

Do we believe that this passage is God himself speaking? That he can and will teach us, correct us, rebuke us, and train us in righteousness.

And when this passage is rightly understood and applied, are we ready to submit to it? Trusting God knows best.

[ 5 : 32 ] Now regardless of the passage, that is the posture we should always take. We come with humility and readiness, expecting the Holy Spirit to work through even complicated passages to change our hearts and minds.

So yes, this passage is difficult. But I don't think it's impossible to understand. Now it's certainly going to be stretching.

I spent more time than usual in my study this week, wrestling with it. But in the end, I think we can be reasonably certain of the overall main point.

Even if we're not sure of all the specifics. And so this morning, I'll try to lead you slowly and methodically, step by step, to help you piece together what 1 Corinthians 11, verse 2 to 16 is all about.

And then at the end, we'll try to tie it together and reflect on what all this means for us today. And so today's sermon might go slightly longer than usual. And I just ask for you to be prepared to really concentrate this morning.

[ 6 : 39 ] So first of all, I want to do some context setting. At first glance, Paul looks as if he's moving on to something completely new and unrelated to the previous sections of 1 Corinthians.

But the more I studied this week, the more I'm convinced that's not quite true. Now in my Bible overview class this past Thursday, I talked about the importance of literary context.

That is, we should always ask of any passage. How does this section fit within the structure of the larger whole? How does this passage fit within 1 Corinthians chapter 8 to 14?

And that, I think, will begin to help us make sense of this passage. So let's begin by looking at context. Which in turn would help us answer the following questions.

Question 1. What are the Corinthian Christians like? Well, from the last few weeks, we know that freedom is something that they hold onto very dearly.

[ 7 : 42 ] I have the right to do anything, they declared last week. In Christ, everything is permissible. And we saw that on one level, they were right.

Idols had no hold on them anymore. Idols are nothing after all. And so they felt like they could eat idol food without holding back. They're in Christ.

They're free. But we also saw that they were quite self-centred because their freedom was all about themselves. They didn't think of how their freedom affected others or how their freedom could advance the gospel of Christ.

Indeed, earlier in 1 Corinthians 3 verse 3, Paul says, You are still worldly. And that's their big problem.

They were self-centred. They wanted to act like the world. And so they misused their freedom in immature and inappropriate ways. And so it makes sense that whatever the issue was in 11 verse 2 to 16, it would have emerged as a result of going too far with their freedom due to their self-centred worldly ways.

[ 8 : 59 ] Question 2. What might the setting of 1 Corinthians 11 verse 2 to 16 be? Again, this is where I think the larger literary context helps us.

If we look from 1 Corinthians 11 verse 17 all the way to the end of chapter 14, we'll notice that Paul is addressing issues to do with public worship.

And so in 11 verse 17 to 34, which we'll look at next week, he will correct Christians who are behaving in selfish and self-centred ways when they gather together as church for the Lord's Supper.

In 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, he'll address abuse of the gift of tongues and the place of prophesying in the church assembly.

And of course, just last week, we saw that he was contrasting the Lord's table with the table of demons. And so in other words, he is addressing a formal, public, religious context.

[ 10 : 11 ] And so that means, I believe, that we have good reason to think that the setting of 1 Corinthians 11 verse 2 to 16 is also public or at least semi-public worship, even though it doesn't say so explicitly because that is the setting that he's been addressing in all these chapters.

Question 3. What has Paul been doing so far in the second half of 1 Corinthians? What has he been saying since chapter 8? Well, do you remember last week what the take-home message was?

Let me remind you. Look at 10 verse 31. So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

So in the face of the Corinthian Christians' worldliness and the misuse of your freedom in regards to idol food, Paul says, this is what you need to remember.

It's all about God's glory. And then he spells out what that means in chapter 10 verse 32, that you don't cause anyone to stumble, including the church of God.

[ 11 : 28 ] That's what he says in verse 32. And that you are always seeking the good of others, including the salvation of non-Christians. Verse 33. In fact, you glorify God by following the example of Paul as he follows the example of Christ.

11 verse 1. Now, why might that be relevant? Because in 11 verse 2 to 16, I think that is still the overall take-home message.

Paul's message is still going to be don't misuse your freedom, but let your practice glorify God, especially in the way you edify and not stumble others.

It's just that having applied this principle to idol food, he's now going to apply this principle to a different issue. And so let me sum up what we've said so far.

We've said that we know the Corinthian Christians are a self-centered bunch who are really into freedom and who want consciously or subconsciously to be like the world.

[ 12 : 41 ] We know that in the second half of 1 Corinthians, Paul is addressing a setting of public worship. And we know that his big principle is to glorify God in everything, especially in our relationships with one another by building one another up.

So with that, let us wade into the waters of our passage today. And let's ponder, how might the Corinthian Christians be misusing their freedom in public worship?

Well, here we need to do some detective work. Looking at today's passage as a whole, we notice that men and women are in focus. They are mentioned all throughout.

And so clearly, it has something to do with men and women, and especially the way they relate to one another in church. Now, this immediately brings up one of the difficult questions of this passage.

Is Paul here talking about men and women in general, or husbands and wives in particular? You see, the ancient Greek language had no separate word for husband and wife.

[ 14 : 01 ] The Greek word used here can either just mean man and woman, or husband and wife. It depends entirely on the context. And so on balance, I think it is a little more likely that Paul assumes what he says here will primarily apply to the husband-wife relationship.

Although, there is probably a broad principle as to how men and women in general are to relate to one another in church. Now, I think you'll see that a little better as we keep moving through this passage.

And of course, feel free to ask me more afterwards about that if you wish. So, we have, we know it's about men and women. And this is also about honour and shame.

You see, when we scan through the passage, we notice that those words keep popping up. There is that word dishonour in verses 4 and 5. Of course, there's the word disgrace in verses 6 and 14.

There is the word glory in verse 7. There is talk about being proper in verse 13. And so, these are all the terminology of honour and shame.

[ 15 : 21 ] Those are the categories that we're dealing with. And this is about what people around you make of your actions. Does the way you conduct male-female or husband-wife relationships bring you, your spouse, and ultimately God, honour, esteem, reverence, or is it the opposite?

So, it seems as if the Corinthian Christians were using their freedom to engage in some sort of social practice that brought dishonour.

In particular, as we'll see later on, it appears they were doing something that disrupted God's intended order for male-female relationships. Now, perhaps they were saying something along these lines.

Hey, Paul, remember how you told us that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female because we all belong to Jesus?

Hey, we're all equal, we're all the same. So, why can't we relate to one another how we like, we're free? And so, Paul is writing to clarify and correct this kind of behaviour.

[ 16 : 43 ] In verse 2, Paul says, I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding on to the traditions just as I pass them on to you.

and so he's saying, yes, you're all equal in Christ and I praise you for holding on to that teaching. Traditions here simply means apostolic teaching.

But, verse 3, he goes on to say, I want you to realise. In other words, he's saying, I need to make some clarification, I need to correct your application, just like he did back in chapter 8 when it came to idle food.

And to make his case, he proceeds in this way. First of all, he offers an eternal truth that will provide the key principle for the whole passage.

And then, second of all, he will show how that truth works out in a culturally appropriate way for the Corinthians. And third of all, he will then give the theological reasoning for why they should do what he says.

[ 18 : 06 ] And so, that's where we're going next. So, firstly, the eternal truth. Honour your head.

Look at verse 3. Paul Paul begins by making known to us that when it comes to relationships, there is an order God has ordained.

He puts three relationships in parallel. Man and Christ, man and wife, God the father in relationship to Christ. And notice how in each pair, the key thing is that there is a head.

That's the key thing. Now, what does that word head mean? you might think it's straightforward, but it's actually one of the most intense debates in biblical studies in the last few decades.

What did that word mean to its original hearers? And so, initially, I was going to take a bit of time explaining the debate, but in the end, I finally decided to take this part out and just keep it really simple.

[ 19 : 31 ] And for those who wish to dig a little deeper, you can read what I've written in the appendix in your sermon, Hannah. But basically, there are three options. Some scholars think that it means source, like the head of a river.

Some other scholars think head here means someone who is preeminent, who has the leading role, so to speak. And then there are some scholars who say that head means authority, like when you say the head of a department.

And I agree with the scholars that the word head here inescapably has connotations of authority. You just can't escape it.

You can see my appendix for more. But, without losing that sense of authority, the word preeminent in the sense of someone who has the honoured status seems to me to be the best choice in this case.

context. For that seems to me to also fit best with the context. Now, context is often very important for helping work out what a word means exactly.

[ 20 : 46 ] And the context here, remember, is not so much who is in charge of what, but honour and shame. And so, head as the one with preeminence certainly makes more sense.

And it certainly makes more contextual sense than source. To say in verse 3, for example, that God is the source of Christ, runs very close to making a heretical statement that Jesus is a created being.

And I cannot imagine Paul being so careless in his language. Okay, just in case I lost some of you here, let me just try to get you back on track to the main point of your loss.

So, in verse 3, Paul is showing us that God has ordained an order to our relationships. And in each of these relationships described here, there is a head to be honoured.

We see that in the first of these relationships as the head of every man, Christ deserves all honour. That's pretty controversial. And so it is with the third of these relationships.

[ 22 : 05 ] God, as the head of Christ, is also honoured. Now, here we are probably referring to the relationship between God the Father and Jesus while he was here on earth.

For all throughout his life on earth, Jesus always made sure to honour or glorify the Father. He took on human nature and yet his work on earth is never independent of the Father.

So for example, let me just give you a few things that Jesus says in John's Gospel on the screen. In John 14 verse 10, Jesus says, The words I say to you I do not speak on my authority.

Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his work. Or take John 17 verse 4. I have brought you, that's God the Father, glory on earth by finishing the work you have me to do.

Now, that's Jesus speaking. And so each time, Jesus wants to make clear that he is doing all he does in obedience and honour of his heavenly Father who sent him.

[ 23 : 23 ] And so Paul's big point is this. If the first and the third pair of the relationships are about the honour given to the head, so is the second pair, the middle pair of the relationships.

The husband is the head of the wife and so deserves honour accordingly. Now, the parallel is not exact.

Jesus is obviously to be honoured in a more exalted way by everybody than any mere man. And this also in no way implies that the wife is somehow inferior or second rate.

After all, when Christ honoured his head, when he honoured his heavenly father, that in no way implied that Jesus was inferior or second rate.

He is completely equal in status with the father. Nor is Paul implying that the woman should not get any honour. Interestingly, later on in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 21 to 24, Paul makes clear that even so-called weaker parts of the body are to be treated with honour and there is no way that a head can say that he doesn't need them.

[ 24 : 51 ] And so Paul's point is not to imply any of those things, but just to make this simple point. There is an order in each of these relationships and in each of these relationships we honour our head.

There is an order in each of these relationships and in each of these relationships we honour our head. This order of things has not been overturned by the gospel but is in fact affirmed by it.

And so that's the eternal truth. That's the key principle. Now, how should that principle work out in the Corinthian church?

We move on to the second part of Paul's argument in verses 4 to 6. Now, having established this principle, we begin to see that somehow this principle is being violated.

Somehow or other worldly practices that showed dishonour to the head had seeped into the church. We can see that in both verses 4 and 5 that Paul has received news that both the men and the women in the Corinthian church are doing something which communicates dishonour.

[ 26 : 15 ] and it had to do with the way they covered or uncovered their heads when they were praying and prophesying. Now, what might that be all about?

The scholars have debated endlessly about what this means exactly. For some, it could be that the men were wearing Roman togas over their heads in a way that imitated how Romans worshipped their gods.

So, in other words, they were worshipping like pagans when the men did that. Meanwhile, the women, by not covering their heads with a veil, they were imitating the upper class Roman women who did likewise.

And by doing so, they were doing the equivalent of someone taking off their wedding rings because the veil was a sign of their marriage. And so, in both cases, they would be dishonouring their heads, the men, by not giving proper worship to Jesus, they're acting as if they're worshipping a Roman god instead, and the women, shaming their husbands by not acknowledging them to be their husbands.

And there's certainly some archaeological evidence that suggests this. I probably should have put a photo of a statue or something on the slide this morning. Or, it could be that Paul is not actually talking about material coverings like a toga or a veil, but that he's actually talking about long and short hair.

[ 28 : 00 ] You can see that in the footnote to verses 4-7 in the NIV 2011. You see, the Greek is a bit ambiguous, and so it could actually refer to hair as well.

In which case, the guys with long hair would be imitating how the devotees of a god named Dionysius worshipped him.

You see, these devotees who worshipped Dionysius, they often dressed like women, they kept long hair, and they did that in honour of their god who was androgynous or bisexual.

Similarly, the women, by not covering their hair in public, and by not having it done up, they could also be signalling with their long hair their sexual availability, because that's how uncovered long hair was also understood by many in the Mediterranean world.

And again, that would obviously be dishonouring to the husband. And again, there's historical evidence for this. And that's why verse 6, Paul says, such a woman might as well have a head shave.

[ 29 : 08 ] You see, that's what happened during that time for people caught in adultery. And so, Paul is saying that her behaviour is as shameful as an adulteress.

Now, it's really, really difficult to know which scenario is correct and even this past week, I kept changing my mind as to which one it is. And right now, I'm inclined to it being hair, but I wouldn't be surprised if tomorrow I change my mind again and find myself thinking the other way.

But, either way, the larger point remains the same. Paul is saying, brothers and sisters, don't do anything in your culture that communicates you dishonour your hair.

For it is not the coverings or the hair in themselves that are the problem. The problem lies in what those things communicate to those around you in your society.

By imitating the world around you, you might think that you are being free, but really you are just falling back into idolatry and sexual immorality, precisely the things that Paul warns against back in chapter 10.

[ 30 : 28 ] And, by bringing your heads into disrepute, you are disrupting the divine order of relationships laid down in verse 3.

You are going against how God ordered the world. And this is key, because that tells us that the commands of verses 4 and 5 may be culturally situated, but the principle behind it is transcultural.

It's cultural, because obviously, head coverings and long hair doesn't communicate the same thing in 21st century Sarawak as it does in 1st century Corinth.

After all, if you are a guy with long hair today, I don't think anyone automatically assumes that you are worshipping a pagan god. Or if you are a lady and you are not wearing any hats in church, I don't think anyone thinks that you are prostituting yourselves.

But the principle of honouring your head is transcultural. And that was what Paul was ultimately concerned with, not so much whether they had head coverings or long hair or not, but whether they were honouring their heads in culturally appropriate ways.

[ 31 : 49 ] And so the question to ask then is this, what practices in our culture today in the 21st century might communicate something similar?

Is there anything that would bring shame, whether in our dressing or in some other way? is there anything we're doing that would disrupt the ordered relationships of verse 3?

Perhaps the best parallel I can think of is if a married woman came up in the service to pray or to read the Bible, but just before she did, she removed her wedding ring in full view of everyone.

Just think of how distracting that would be. Think of what that might communicate to the non-Christians who were in our service. Perhaps you can think of better parallels than that.

If you do, please come and tell me afterwards. But that is the question to ask. And with that, we come to the third part of Paul's argument.

[ 33 : 01 ] In verses 7 onwards, he now gives the theological reasoning for what we've said so far, for why we said what he said so far is important.

And the reason is this, because this is grounded in the order of creation. This is grounded in the order of creation.

The reason men and women are to relate in this way is because of creation order. In other words, it's not merely cultural but theological. And so let's look at what Paul says.

Verse 7, a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

Now let's get clear straight away what this does not mean. It doesn't mean that women are not made in the image of God. Paul knows his Old Testament inside out and so he would definitely know Genesis 1, verse 27 where that is stated clearly.

[ 34 : 11 ] And so why does he phrase things this way? Simple, because the issue he is focusing on is not the image but the glory. But what does it mean for women to be the glory of man?

Well, Paul tells us in verses 8 and 9 where he now draws explicitly from the creation account of Genesis 2. That's really important to keep in mind. That's what he's doing.

In creation, Paul points out, man was created first as the head and then secondly, woman as the helper. Genesis 2, verse 18 and 20 makes that clear.

That is the creation order. She is the bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, made from his rib, and the one who brings him great joy.

And so, Genesis 2, verse 24, she is the one in whom he glories. She is a masterpiece because she is definitely not like any of the animals, nor is she simply another identical man, but one who is perfectly made to accomplish God's purposes by complimenting the man.

[ 35 : 35 ] Now, that's the spirit in which were men to take that line from verse 9. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. Paul doesn't mean here that the woman is created to be man's slave, you know, doing whatever he likes with her.

No, what he means is something more glorious. So, remember the background is Genesis 2, and you see, back in the creation account, yes, it's true, man was made first, he's the head.

But, if you recall Genesis 2, as God looked over creation, for the first time in the book of Genesis, he says something is not good.

Now, what is not good? The man is alone. Why is that not good? Because, on his own, man cannot rule and take care of the world in the way God wants.

He cannot be fruitful and multiply. Now, if man and woman were made together at the same time, man might not have recognised how much he needs a partner.



[ 36 : 52 ] God but, because Adam was made first, he becomes more aware of how things can only be good because Eve exists.

He becomes more aware of how much he needs Eve to help him. See, no Eve, no way to fulfil God's purposes. It's not good.

And only with Eve is that possible. And so, to say that the woman was created for man here, it's not meant to diminish her, but to elevate her standing.

It's to say that she alone, not another animal, not another man, is the only person who can meet the need of the hour. And so, yes, she is the helper in the relationship, but that doesn't mean she's inferior.

No, it's the other way around. She's man's glory. She makes things complete. And so, yes, creation shows that there is an order with man as the head and woman as the helper.

[ 38 : 00 ] That order is not reversible. That's why they should be honoring of the head. That's why in verse 10, a woman shouldn't be controlled by a desire to be like the world, but should exercise control over her own head.

She should decide whatever goes on her literal head will honor her metaphorical head, her husband. But, verse 11, Paul says that in no way cancels out the fact that men and women are interdependent.

So, yes, verse 12, the first woman came from man, Eve came from Adam's rib, but don't forget every subsequent man has to come from a woman's womb.

And so, yes, there is an order, yes, there is headship, and yet there is also interdependence, there is complementarity. And so, both need each other as men and women and not just as genderless beings.

So, let's review what we've said so far. The Corinthians were behaving how they like in public worship, especially when it comes to gender relations.

[ 39 : 26 ] They justified that as freedom. And in response, Paul says, my brothers and sisters, I want you to realise that there is a God-given order to relationships.

And that is best expressed in that eternal truth, honour your head. And so, express that in a culturally appropriate way.

For this relationship between men and women is grounded in the order of creation. Right? So, that's the argument so far. And in verses 13 to 16, then he gives another reason.

He says, this also respects the norms that God has built into this world. Now, because of time, we won't look at verses 13 to 16 in any detail at all.

But in a nutshell, Paul seems to be saying this, hey guys, you know, ultimately, all that I've just said, it does feel like that's how things are supposed to be like, doesn't it?

[ 40 : 35 ] Ultimately, you know instinctively that when a guy goes out of his way to act like a woman, that's not right, is it? And you know that when a woman doesn't deny her femaleness, that's a good thing, isn't it?

That's how it is. That's the practice all churches should follow. That is verses 13 to 16 in a nutshell. So let me begin wrapping things up.

This has not been an easy passage. And I still didn't tell you about the angels in verse 10. And the short answer is, I can guess, but I don't really know what that's about.

But I hope you have begun to see things a little more clearly than you did 40 minutes ago. But what are some of the things that we can take away from this today? Let me offer a few concluding reflections.

Firstly, the distinction between male and female really does matter. The Corinthians made the mistake of thinking that since they were free in Christ, that meant male-female distinctions didn't matter any longer.

[ 41 : 58 ] But to say that everyone is equal in Christ, it's not the same as saying that everyone is uniformly the same in Christ. Instead, God says there is an order to creation and order to relationships, one that we know instinctively is reflected in the way things are.

And if this is God-given, we should celebrate that. We should celebrate the fact that men are men and women are women and we shouldn't try to blur those distinctions.

Now, of course, what that looks like from culture to culture will be different. If you're in Scotland, for example, no one will think that you're less of a man simply because you wear a kilt.

But the point is especially important to say in a world where gender is increasingly an area of confusion. The distinction between male and female really does matter.

Now, let me hasten to say at this point that gender dysphoria is a real thing. That's when someone experiences great distress because psychologically you don't feel like your biological sex.

[ 43 : 16 ] And someone who experiences gender dysphoria needs great sympathy, needs pastoral care, needs lots of help to walk through that. But that doesn't negate the truth that God has made us male and female.

Secondly, how we relate to one another as male and female matters. Wives are to honour their husbands as the head.

And that means that they shouldn't seek to undermine their husbands. And indeed, they are to understand that in Christ, the role of helper is actually a glorious one.

For Christ has subverted our ideas of glory. The world's idea of glory is the person who is the CEO of the company or the president of the country.

But Christ shows us that it is those who seek to serve whom God honours. That's the example of Christ himself, wasn't it? And men are not to shame Christ either in their role as the head of the family.

[ 44 : 28 ] They are certainly not to diminish the woman who is their glory. And husbands and wives and men and women in general should acknowledge that we need one another with all the gifts and abilities that we bring to the table in all the roles that we play.

And I think that's true not just in a marriage but also in God's household, the church. We need to relate one another in honourable ways, in ways that recognise the contribution of each other.

And then thirdly, we should not seek our personal preferences but the glory of God in public worship. Now notice that Paul wants both men and women to fully participate in the church gathering.

Both men and women are to pray and to prophesy. We'll talk about prophecy in a few weeks' time. It's a good thing when that happens. But at the same time, you can't just do whatever you like.

The principles of last week to seek the good of others, to glorify God, they're all still in play here. Instead, we should do what it takes in our public worship to make sure that ultimately it is Christ who is honoured.

[ 45 : 55 ] It is his name that is glorified rather than us who are grabbing all the attention. Now, for the Corinthians that involve their literal heads in some way, they had to make sure how however they were doing with their heads, honoured God.

And for us today, it might not involve head coverings, but perhaps there might be a few different ways that we have to think about. Maybe for the musicians, they have to think about how they play their instruments.

Is it in a way that is honouring to God? Or does it bring attention to themselves? For those who teach, do they teach in a way that honours God rather than brings attention to themselves and so on and so forth?

Because ultimately, it is God who deserves all the honour. Well, my time is almost up.

It's been a truly humbling exercise this past week, trying to get to grips with this passage and trying to work out how to preach this in an accessible manner. I've tried my best, thanks, and I'll trust God with it.

[ 47 : 11 ] But I honestly hope that we will go away with thanksgiving in our hearts because we realise that God has not left our world messy, but that he has given us a good order and that would spur us on to a greater resolve to honour our ultimate head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

let's pray. Father, this has not been an easy passage, but Father, we recognise that it is still your word, it is your word to rest, and it is a good word.

So, Father, please continue to help us to wrestle with our understanding of this passage as well as its implications, help us to obey it, help us to recognise the good order that you have woven into the fabric of our world.

And, Father, I just pray, Lord, that you would help us to think harder about the way we relate to one another, especially as men and wives, and more broadly as men and women, help us to act in ways that are honourable to one another and ultimately to you.

And would that in turn help us to build up one another and ultimately be a good witness to the watching world, that it would advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 48 : 58 ] All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.