

Headship and Honor: Worship, Gender, and the Angels

1 Corinthians 11:2–16 (ESV)

Student Devotional

Dress codes, respect, and...angels?

This passage might seem like a weird mix of topics at first. Paul is writing to the Corinthians about **head coverings**, gender roles in worship, and even a mysterious reference to angels (v. 10). At first glance, it might seem like an outdated church dress code. But as soon as you dig in, you realize **it's about much more than what people wore on their heads**.

Paul is teaching about **order in worship, honoring God's design, and how our actions in public worship affect those around us—even in the spiritual realm**.

The real question is: **How do we worship in a way that honors God and doesn't distract or confuse others?**

As you go through this devotional, think about how you **present yourself in worship—not just in clothing, but in attitude, respect, and focus on Jesus**.

Day 1: Honor in Worship—More Than Just Appearances

Scripture:

“Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.” (1 Corinthians 11:2, ESV)

Think About It:

Imagine walking into a courtroom to meet a judge. You wouldn't show up in **pajamas and flip-flops**—not because you *can't*, but because it's about **respecting the setting**.

Worship is the same way. It's not about **dress codes**—it's about **honoring God** in a way that reflects order, respect, and devotion.

Paul begins this passage **by commending the Corinthians** for keeping the traditions he taught them. That tells us something important: **this issue mattered in the early church**. Worship wasn't just a casual, anything-goes event. It had **structure, purpose, and significance**.

Paul then moves into a discussion about **head coverings**—a cultural sign of respect at the time. The question for us today isn't, "*Should we wear head coverings?*" but, "*How do we demonstrate honor and reverence in worship?*"

Pray It:

God, help me approach worship with the right heart—not just going through the motions, but showing You honor in everything I do.

Do It:

Take a moment before your next worship gathering and ask: *Am I preparing my heart and mind to truly honor God today?* Choose **one small way** to be more intentional in worship—whether it's **arriving early, dressing with respect, or engaging more fully in prayer and singing**.

Day 2: God's Design for Leadership and Worship

Scripture:

"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." (1 Corinthians 11:3, ESV)

Think About It:

When we hear words like "*headship*" or "*authority*", our minds often go straight to **power struggles**. But that's not what Paul is talking about here.

Paul lays out a **divine order**:

- **God is the head of Christ** (even though Christ is fully God).
- **Christ is the head of man** (leading him in spiritual authority).
- **Man is the head of woman** (in the context of marriage and worship leadership).

This isn't about **who's more valuable**—men and women are equally created in God's image. But Paul is pointing to **a structure God designed for leadership, accountability, and unity**. Even Jesus, though equal with the Father, **submitted to His Father's will**.

In the same way, men and women have **distinct, complementary roles** in worship and life. This isn't about **superiority**—it's about **working together in God's design**.

Pray It:

Jesus, help me to see Your design not as a burden but as a blessing. Teach me how to live in a way that honors the roles You've given me, while valuing and respecting others.

Do It:

Take a moment to reflect: **How do I view leadership and submission in my life?** Whether it's in the church, at work, or in relationships, think about one way you can **embrace God's design with humility and respect.**

Day 3: What's Up with the Angels?

Scripture:

“That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”(1 Corinthians 11:10, ESV)

Think About It:

This might be one of the **strangest verses in the Bible**. Why does Paul mention angels when talking about **head coverings and worship?**

There are a few possible explanations:

1. **Angels observe our worship**—just like they witnessed creation (Job 38:7) and celebrate when someone gets saved (Luke 15:10).
2. **Angels represent order in God's creation**—and our worship should reflect that same order.
3. **It's a reminder that worship is a supernatural event**—we're not just singing songs; we're entering into something bigger.

The key takeaway? **How we worship matters—not just to people, but to God and the spiritual realm.** When we gather, it's not just a casual get-together; it's a moment of cosmic significance.

Pray It:

Lord, open my eyes to the **spiritual significance of worship**. Help me see that what I do in church isn't just routine—it's a moment that matters in heaven and on earth.

Do It:

Before your next worship service, **pause and remind yourself:** *This isn't just about me. It's about God, His people, and even unseen realities.* Go into worship with that mindset.

Day 4: The Beauty of Interdependence

Scripture:

“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.”
(1 Corinthians 11:11–12, ESV)

Think About It:

Paul has talked about **headship** and **authority**, but now he makes sure we don’t get the wrong idea. **Men and women aren’t rivals—they’re teammates.**

Yes, **God designed a structure** for leadership in the home and the church, but that doesn’t mean men don’t need women, or vice versa. Paul reminds us:

- **Men and women are interdependent.**
- **We were made to complement and support each other.**
- **Everything comes from God—so no one should boast.**

In a world where people often **pit men and women against each other**, Paul gives a radical alternative: **honor, respect, and partnership.**

Pray It:

God, thank You for the way You designed men and women to work together. Help me to value and respect the people around me, recognizing that we need each other in Your kingdom.

Do It:

Encourage someone today—whether it’s a friend, a mentor, or a family member—by affirming the **unique role they play** in God’s design.

Day 5: Honor, Worship, and Culture

Scripture:

“Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ... If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.” (1 Corinthians 11:13, 16 ESV)

Think About It:

Some parts of this passage are tied to **first-century culture**—but the core message is timeless:

Worship should be done in a way that honors God and doesn't distract or divide.

For the Corinthians, that meant **following cultural norms about head coverings**. Today, it might mean:

- **Dressing modestly to keep the focus on Christ.**
- **Worshiping with an attitude of reverence.**
- **Respecting church traditions without making them idols.**

At the end of the day, **it's not about legalistic rules—it's about honoring God and loving others well.**

Pray It:

Jesus, help me focus on what really matters in worship—bringing You glory and showing love to others. Let my heart, actions, and even my appearance reflect You.

Do It:

Before your next church service, **ask yourself:** *Is there anything about how I present myself that might distract or confuse others in worship?* If so, consider adjusting—not because you have to, but because **love puts others first.**

You're Ready for Class!

This week, you've seen that **worship isn't just about songs or sermons—it's about honor, order, and pointing people to Jesus.**

So here's the challenge:

How can you worship in a way that reflects God's design and honors those around you?

Come to class ready to share—and let's commit to worshiping God with our whole hearts!

Before We Gather

- How might ancient believers have understood the idea of “dishonoring” or “shaming” someone else if they neglected cultural customs around dress or worship?
- How does Paul hold both a respect for cultural hierarchy and a belief in the mutual interdependence of man and woman together? What tensions might that create for us today?
- What are some modern examples of how “nature” and “custom” merge in discussions of appropriate attire or public behavior?
- Recall a time you ignored a small custom (like wearing the wrong footwear to a formal event) and caused unexpected offense. How did you handle it, and what did you learn?
- Where have you seen a church either cling too tightly to tradition or swing too far into “anything goes”? Which extremes create confusion about the gospel?
- Are there local or cultural aspects your congregation might adapt—like certain greetings, modesty guidelines, or music style—so that outsiders see God’s love instead of feeling like outsiders?