

26. Learning Why God Made Us Different

In our last topic, we saw that Paul gave us an example by the fact that he chose to do all that he did to bring glory to God. In the same way, we saw that we want to give our physical and spiritual children an example for their lives by doing all that we do in our lives to bring glory to God. That will also make it possible for us to invite our children to imitate us just as we imitate Christ. Since Adam and Eve first sinned, we see that there have been conflicts and blame between men and women. Today, we are going to see that God had reasons for making men and women different.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1-3, we read, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.” Here, we see that Paul invited the Corinthians to imitate his life because he was imitating the life of Christ. Paul was thankful for the fact that the Corinthians remembered the things that Paul had taught them when he was in the city of Corinth. However, he wanted them to do more than remember what he had said. He encouraged them to keep the traditions just as he had given them to the Corinthians. The word that is translated “keep” means *to hold fast to the things that had been taught*.

The word that is translated “traditions or ordinances” speaks of the things that have been given by word of mouth or in writing. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, we read, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” In this verse, Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the things that he had taught them. Some of those things had been taught to them directly while Paul was in the city of Thessalonica. Other things had been taught to them in the letter that he had written to them that became the book of 1 Thessalonians. As a result, Paul was speaking to the Thessalonians about things that eventually became the Word of God. That is also the way that Paul is using the word here in 1 Corinthians. He wanted them to hold fast and obey the things that he had taught that were the Word of God.

In these verses, we see that one of the things that Paul had taught the Corinthians was about headship. A key thing to understand is that headship talks about leadership not superiority. This is made clear by the fact that we are told that the head of Christ is God. In John 6:38, Christ said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Then, in John 10:30, Christ said, “I and My Father are one.” Christ and the Father are equal but Christ carried out the will of the Father.

Ephesians 5:23 says, “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” In this verse, we also see that the husband is to be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Then, Ephesians also says that Christ is the Savior of the body. Here, we see a second thing about headship. Just as Christ is the also the Savior and protector of the church, the husband is to be the protector of the wife. The first failure in the Garden of Eden was when Adam failed to protect his wife from the temptation of Satan since he was standing right there with her.

In 1 Corinthians 11:4-6, we read, “Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” In these verses, we see that both men and women can pray and prophesy. Notice that the word used here is prophesy with an “s” and not prophecy with a “c”. Biblical prophecy spelled with a “c” is defined in 2 Peter 1:20-21 where we read, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Both the Old and New Testament prophets gave us the written Word of God and the Bible has been completed because Ephesians 2:20 says that the apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the church is built. (The most important ministry of the apostles was to give us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ according to Acts 1:21-22.)

Prophesy with an “s” is used primarily to describe sharing what has already been written down in the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 14:31-33 points out that all of the men can prophesy in the church service. Then, Titus 2:3-5 says that the older women are to teach the younger women how to apply the Word of God in their daily lives. In the city of Corinth, the women that had their heads shaved or shorn were those women who were prostitutes. Remember that the question in this section is about headship. Since man is created in the image of God, he is to reflect the image of God as he prays or prophesies. Since woman was created from the rib of a man, she is to reflect her recognition of the headship of her husband by having her head covered with her hair. Men and women are both to share the Word of God but they are to reflect headship in ways appropriate to each.

This reflection of headship is explained in more detail in the following verses. 1 Corinthians 11:7-10 says, “For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority* on *her* head, because of the angels.” Here, we see that Paul said that men were not to cover their heads because they reflect the glory of God. In contrast, the women are to cover their heads because God made them to be the glory of the man. Then, the covering is explained in verses 14 and 15. In those verses, we read, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering.” Here, we see that the covering of a woman is her long hair because that is how she reflects the headship of the man.

Many times, people in churches get into disputes about how long or how short the hair of men and women should be. In actual fact, when such a conflict develops, the people involved have missed the whole point of the passage. Instead, the passage is about showing our submission to the Lord by recognizing the headship of God. One of the things that people can never force another person to do is submit. A person can force someone else to obey but submission is always a choice by the person. That is why Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then, we are given six examples of how we are to submit. Ephesians 5:22-24 tells us why a wife

submits to her husband. Then, Ephesians 5:25-33 tells us how a husband submits to Christ and to his wife. Ephesians 6:1-3 tells how children submit to their parents. Ephesians 6:4 tells how parents, and especially fathers, submit to their children. Ephesians 6:5-8 tells how servants or employees submit to their masters. Then, Ephesians 6:9 tells how masters show their submission to their servants or employees. When we choose to submit, we have a proper inner attitude and choose to place our full potential at the disposal of another.

As we recognize the headship of God, we should recognize as men and women that God has created us to complete one another. 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 says, “Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.” God is the source for both men and women. However, God chose to make both men and women in such a way that when we follow a Biblical pattern we complete each other. God did this because He recognized that we have that need for completion as in Genesis 2:18 where we read, “And the LORD God said, ‘*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” Here, we see the first thing in the Bible that God said was not good. God wanted Adam to recognize his aloneness before He created woman so that they could make one another complete as a husband and wife team. However, there was a need for one to have the headship and God gave Adam that responsibility, which he failed to take when Eve was tempted.

Since the only women that shaved their heads in Corinth were prostitutes, that is why God asked in 1 Corinthians 11:13-15, “Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering.” Here, we see that God said it is a glory for a woman to have long hair. In contrast, long hair does not do the same thing for a man.

However, Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 11:16, “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.” The word that is translated “contentious” speaks of a person that is fond of strife. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that a contentious person does not bring glory to God and contentious people in the church will not bring glory to God. Instead, we are to help both men and women learn to recognize the ultimate headship of God and realize that we are to serve Him in all things. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others why God has made men and women different so that they complete each other, we realize that people will only fully appreciate these differences as they learn to recognize that Christ is the Head of the church and that the Father is the Head of Christ. It is as we work under the Headship of Christ and the Father that we realize that Christ has made us different so that we can effectively work together in unity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help others understand why Christ made us different.