

Equal but Different 1 Corinthians 11v2-16

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[0 : 0 0] Reading from Genesis chapter 2 verses 18 to 23 and that's on page 5 in the church bible. That's Genesis 2, 18 to 23. The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out from the man and he brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. I am reading from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 to verse 2 to 16.

[1 : 2 0] It is page 1152. I read. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding me to the teachings just as I pass them on to you.

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covers dishonour his head.

And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovers dishonour her head. It is just as though her head were shaved.

If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her head cut off. And if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her head cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.

A man ought not to cover his head since he is the image of glory of God. But the woman is the glory of man.

[2 : 3 7] For man does not come from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

For this reason and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourself. It is proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered.

Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him? But that if a woman has hair long, it is her glory.

For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be convinced to us about this, we have no other practice nor do the churches of God.

[3 : 5 0] Amen. Thank you. Thank you, Odette, and thank you, Kate.

Please keep your Bibles open at 1 Corinthians 11. As we said, we're starting a new series in Corinthians, which is all about the church.

So as we gather together, as we are right now, what should it look like? What should the practice be? How should we behave towards one another? And we start with the very easy topic of men and women.

Anybody else want to do it? Well, we need to pray, so let's pray together. Blessed are you, O God, King of the universe, for not making me a woman.

Amen. Amen. Are you shocked? Well, that was the morning prayer for every Jewish man at the local synagogue.

[5 : 20] They simply believed that to be a man was, well, to be superior. In fact, men would not even accept the testimony of a woman.

Listen to the Jewish historian Josephus, who was writing in the first century. This is what he says. But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex, since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain or fear of punishment.

You see, in religious life and in social life, women were treated as inferior. Women couldn't sit with men, and women couldn't talk with men.

So if this was a synagogue back in those times, the women would all be over here, and the men would all be over there. But slowly, that thinking changed.

As people were liberated by the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel taught us that, well, women and men were equal in value and worth.

[6 : 43] In fact, as men and women, as they came to faith in Christ, so they gathered together in worship. Church was not a place of segregation like the synagogue was, where men gave thanks to God that they were not a woman.

But it was a gathering where men and women together served one another, prayed for one another. Look how the church is described in chapter 12, verse 12.

It was really radical and revolutionary for the time. Chapter 12, verse 12. The body, so it's speaking about the physical body, is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, so head, hands, arms, legs, and so forth.

And though all its parts are many, they form just one body. So it is with Christ, that is, the people of Christ, the church.

For we were all, that is, men and women, baptized by one spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all, men and women, given the one spirit to drink.

[8 : 07] So through faith in Christ, men and women, are one in Christ. But this new gospel liberation, was causing some confusion, within the church.

Rightly so, women welcomed this new equality. But it seems as if, some of the women in the church, were saying, well, there's actually now, no difference, between men and women.

We can do whatever the men do. We can have the same roles, and responsibilities. There's actually, no difference anymore. Now this explains, this very strange issue, that we've just read, in 1 Corinthians 11, about women having to, cover their heads, when they gathered as church.

And about men, not having a covering, on their heads. And it's very strange, because as I look out, there's actually one man, with a head covering, and no women with any coverings.

So that goes to show, how strange it is, for us today. Look at verse 4. Every man, who prays or prophesies, with his head covered, dishonours his head.

[9 : 33] That is, dishonours Christ. Verse 5. And every woman, who prays or prophesies, with her head uncovered, dishonours her head, her husband.

It is just as though, her head, were shaved. It's really not an easy text, to understand. And if you were to read, the commentaries, and the books out there, there's all kinds, of explanations.

And there's a confusion, as to what the covering, actually was. It could be that women, most likely the wives, within the church, had to wear, some sort of shawl, which would cover, their head.

Or, on the other hand, that they simply had, to wear their long hair, which they probably all did, have long hair, and they would tie it up, onto their heads. That was, the covering.

But the issue for us, is not to get bogged down, in what kind of covering, it was. But what the covering, meant, or what the covering, symbolised. And we're given a clue, as to what that is, in verse 10.

[10 : 43] Have a look at verse 10. For this reason, and because of the angels, another confusing part, which we'll get back to, so just park that one, for now.

For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman, ought to have a sign, of authority, on her head. In other words, when women wore, a covering on their head, they were actually saying, yes, there is a difference, between men, and women.

Not just physically, and biologically, but in who we are, as people. Our roles, and our responsibilities. And this was especially true, if you were a married woman. A covering, on your head, was a sign, that you were under, the authority, of your husbands.

So, by not wearing, a covering, some women, in the church, were saying, there's no difference, between men, and women. Husbands, and wives, we all have the same, role.

We're all, the same. Now, it's very strange, for us, to hear that. And so, just to try, and picture it here now, if you could imagine, we're back in Corinth, in the first century, here we are, gathered together, we've understood, something of the gospel, so, yes, there's men and women, and we're all mingled in together.

[12 : 13] That was a good thing. Now, if you were a wife, you would also wear, a head covering, as a sign, and a symbol, to say, yes, you're married, and that you took, your husband's role, seriously.

But some of the women, were saying, ah, let's ditch this head covering, not going to bother with that anymore, don't need to wear that, we're the same. Some, perhaps, were going a step further, and having their hair shaved off, all together, as if to say, there is absolutely no difference.

So, there was some confusion, within the life of the church. Now, let me say this, that this is not a sermon, to enforce head coverings for women, or that men are going to be barred, if they wear a hat, on a Sunday morning.

There are denominations, and churches, that do insist, on those sorts of things. I think they've actually got it wrong. That's not what this text is about. Cultures are different, from the first century, to what they are today.

They do change over time, and the symbolism, to say that men and women were different, may be different today. But one thing that has not changed, from first century Corinth, to 20th century Carigaline, is that God's order, and design for men and women, does not change.

[13 : 50] So, we might not have an issue, with head coverings, but our culture, is telling us, more and more, that there is no difference, between men and women.

So, we have now, what we call, gender neutral schools, where teachers, do not refer to the children, as he and she, but simply as friend.

One principle said this, I want to change things, in society. In my world, there is no girl's world, and there is no boy's world. And of course, it's very common, for people to state, their identity is, gender fluid.

A gender, that transitions, between male and female. So, it's no longer, Mother's Day, and Father's Day, but Parent's Day. In fact, leading sociologists, tell us, that the difference, between men and women, is not based on nature, but are historically constructed, and socially reproduced.

In other words, it's our environment, it's how we were raised, that makes us, who we are. Now, I realise, that that's a very, deep subject, and there's many children, and adults, who struggle, with gender identity, and simply ignoring, the issue, isn't going to help.

[15 : 20] They need, the church's compassion, and support. However, God's order, God's order, and design, for men and women, does not change.

Men and women, are different, and that difference, is to be celebrated, within the church, whether we wear, a covering on our head, or not.

So, how are we to, understand this subject, the relationship, between men, and women, when we gather together, as we are right now?

Well, we're going to look at, three big ideas. Here's the first one. Women and men, are equal. Look at verse three.

Now, I want you to realise, that the head, of every man, is Christ. And the head, of the woman, or the wife, is man, or husband.

[16 : 24] And the head, of Christ, is God. Now, headship, is all about authority. Well, you say, where's the equality, in that Johnny?

It sounds, very chauvinistic, of you to say, the head of woman, is man. You're not going, to grow the church, by saying things like that. Not very popular, or modern. Well, let me say, three brief things, in response to that.

First of all, we are all, under authority. Men, are under, the authority, of Christ. Under the rule, of Christ.

Christ. And Christ, is under God. So, all of us, men, women, we are all, in some way or another, under authority.

Second, this is primarily addressed, to those who are married. It's a little bit technical, but in verse three, when it talks about, the head of the woman, is man, it's the same word, for wife, and husband.

[17 : 34] So, in a married relationship, the husband, is the head of the wife. Not that, every man, is head, over every woman.

Third, we need to understand, that when we're talking, about head, which is all, about authority, is not about, about oppression. But, headship is about, provision, and protection.

So, as head, it is the husband, who takes the lead, in caring for his wife, taking responsibility, for decisions. It is his role, his primary role, to give, all that she needs.

In response, it is the wife, who supports her husband, who submits, to his role, as leader. So, headship, does not mean, the husband, demands his right, and sits in his fine chair, and issues out orders.

It's quite the opposite. The husband, as head, surrenders his rights, for the good, and the well-being, of his wife.

[18 : 49] He is not to abuse, that role, but to use that role, in sacrificial service, caring, for his wife.

So, there is an order, between men and women. But, and here's the point, there is still equality. So, look what it says, at the end of verse 3.

It says there, that the head of Christ, Christ, is God. You see, Christ himself, was under the authority, of his father.

But still, there was equality, between the son, and the father. So, on the one hand, Jesus could say this, in John chapter 10. He could say, my food, is to do the will, of him who sent me, and to finish his work.

So, Jesus readily accepted, that he was there, to do the will, of the father. He was under the authority, of his father. But, at the same time, Jesus could equally say this, I, and the father, are one.

[19 : 56] So, Jesus has, equality, with the father. Now, this relationship, between, Jesus, and the father, should be reflected, in the relationship, between husband, and wife.

There is an order, but, there is equality. So, that means, that within the life, of the church, man should not look, down, at the woman, in superiority.

And, the woman should not, be looking up to man, with inferiority. Both, are equally loved, and treasured, before one another, and both, are equally valued, and treasured, before God.

So, first, let's get that, stone in place. Men, and women, are equal. The second, big idea, is this, that within the context, of church life, women, and men, are different.

different. It's only going, to get more complicated. Look at verse 7. A man, ought not, to cover his head, since he, is the image, and glory, of God.

[21 : 18] But the woman, well, she is the glory, of man. Now, when I read that, to Kirsty, she said, Johnny, I don't want, to be your glory.

And I can sympathise. I can sympathise. It's a difficult one, isn't it, when we read things like this. It's hard for us, to understand. But remember, back to Genesis, and the Garden of Eden.

Remember, how things, unfolded there. God made the man, first. And he gave him, a specific role. He was to care, for the garden. He was to look, after it, maintain it.

He was to give names, to all the animals. In other words, he was to rule, over creation, as God commanded. And in doing this, man, in effect, was reflecting, or displaying, God's glory, as he fulfilled, what God, had called him to do.

Now, this task, of looking after the land, and ruling creation, was huge. The world, was a big place. So, it was no wonder, that God said, in Genesis 2, verse 18, it is not good, for the man, to be alone.

[22 : 34] I will make, a suitable helper, for him. In other words, and perhaps, we know this already, man can't do, things alone.

He can't do, this work, of ruling, on his own. He needs help. This isn't about, loneliness, in effect, that he's got, nobody to talk to. Primarily, it's about, he needs help.

He can't do, the work alone. So, God created, woman. He caused the man, to fall into a deep sleep, and from the man, created woman. So, look what we read, in verse 8, of chapter 11.

For man, it's really, quoting back, from Genesis 2. For man, did not come from woman, but woman, from man. Neither was man, created for woman, but woman, created, for man.

So, God created woman, for the man, for the specific purpose, to support him, and help him, in his role, and responsibility. And in this way, woman is reflecting, or displaying, her husband's glory.

[23 : 47] And that's not a low calling. That is a high calling. It's not a mean task, in the help of ruling, all creation. So, the encouragement here, was not to try and say, we're all the same.

He's saying, no, we're different, in our roles, and responsibilities. And a woman, shouldn't resist, this calling. But submit to it, as part of God's, good order, in God's, good design, for life.

In fact, this special calling, of the wife, actually places her, above, the angels. Have a look at verse 10. That's where we come to that, strange phrase, in verse 10.

For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman, ought to have a sign, of authority, on her head. Back in, chapter 6, verse 3, of 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 3, we're told there, that the believers, the people of God, would one day, have to judge, the angels.

So, the woman, by living out her role, the wife, given her role, and responsibility, is not a low position, but a high position.

[25 : 18] It's one that places her, above the angels, because one day, we will have to, judge the angels. So this is, by no means, a demeaning position.

But back to, what were, main point is. We're to see, that each of us, has a different role, or task, that God has given us.

To the man, essentially, it was the responsibility, of caring, and ruling, over all creation, not least, in his leadership, within family life, and his care, for his wife, his responsibility, to teach, his children.

And to the woman, well, the responsibility, of supporting, and coming, and coming alongside, her husband, and submitting to him, in his task, and in his role.

So when God gave Adam, a wife, he gave him someone, who was like him, but someone, who was different. Different physically, different sexually, different emotionally.

[26 : 29] He gave Adam, a companion, a suitable helper, a designed person, specifically, to help.

This was God's good order, and God's good design, for man, and woman. So within the context, of the church, and in family life, women and men, are different.

And third, women and men, are complementary. Now while we're to celebrate, our difference, women and men, live and work, in partnership together.

So look at verse 11. Look at chapter 11, verse 11. In the Lord, however, woman is not, independent of man, nor is man, independent of woman.

So while we are different, we do actually need, each other. We're dependent, on each other. And if any of you, think you can live, without the opposite sex, well look at verse 12.

[27 : 45] For as woman, came from man, so also man, is born of woman. Just even, at a very basic, biological sense, men are dependent, on women.

We cannot be, without women. And, well, women cannot be, without men. But, everything comes, from God. There's a leveler, for every single, one of us.

Our source, is ultimately, God. But, as part of God's design, we are, interdependent, upon one another. And that means, as men and women, whether you're a man, or a woman, we actually, complement each other.

Just as Adam and Eve, complemented each other, in the garden, so men and women, complement each other, within the life, of the church. In fact, both men and women, are equally gifted.

As we'll see, in the coming weeks, God gifts, every single person, to serve one another, and build the church up. So look at, chapter 12, verse 7, for a minute.

[28 : 56] Chapter 12, verse 7. Now, to each one, that is, men and women, the manifestation, of the Spirit, is given, for the common good.

To one, there is given, through the Spirit, the message of wisdom, and to another, whether men and women, the message of knowledge, and so on. So it is not, man's role, to keep women, in their place, and to stop them, from serving.

If we are to understand, the gospel, and scripture correctly, it's actually, quite the opposite. The church, is to be a gathering, where women, where women, are encouraged, and equipped, to serve.

And that means, that women, within the life of the church, can do a whole lot more, than just make cakes, and coffee. In fact, the context, of chapter 11, implies, that both men and women, should pray, and prophesy.

Have a look at, verse 4, chapter 11. Every man, who prays, or prophesies. Or verse 5, Every woman, who prays, or prophesies.

[30 : 21] So, it is quite clear, isn't it? Men and women, we are to pray, for each other. When we join together, in our home groups, men should pray, for women, and women should pray, for men.

And you should, prophesy, to each other. Now, we'll get on to that, in more detail, as we go through the studies. But primarily, it means, we are to be speaking, God's word, into each other's lives.

Women, speaking God's word, to men. And men, speaking God's word, to women. And it seems, to me, that women, should be served, should be encouraged, to serve, in every area, of life, in the church, that men have.

Except, in the role of elder, and the primary teaching role, which we'll come to, in chapter 14. But I see no reason, as I read through scripture, and as I study, this passage here, that there's no reason, why women cannot, for example, lead, the service, on a Sunday morning.

Or, have some role, or responsibility, in teaching. Or, praying publicly. If the church, is to function, as God intends, then women, and men, must serve, together.

[31 : 48] This is God's, good order, and God's, good design, for his church, family. So, how do you, accept this teaching?

It's not easy, is it? There's some things, that trouble us, some things, that don't sit well, with us. Well, have a look, at verse 13. Judge, for yourselves.

Is it, proper, for a woman, to pray to God, with her head, uncovered? In other words, is it alright, for a woman, especially a married woman, to act, as if there's no difference, between men, or women, that husband and wife, equally have the same roles, and we can do the same things?

Verse 14. Does not, the very nature, of things, teach you, that if a man, has long hair, it is a disgrace, to him, but that if a woman, has long hair, it is her glory?

I mean, we just need to, acknowledge, what nature teaches, nature itself, teaches us, that men, are women, and different, in that context, it was obvious, what a woman was, a woman was, well, she had long hair, and a man, had short hair, and to some extent, that's kind of, what it's like today, it's different, it's different, but, we can tell the difference, and we shouldn't, therefore, confuse, God's good order, and God's good design, men, are men, and women, are women, verse 16, if anyone, wants to be contentious, about this, well, we have no other practice, and nor do, the churches of God, this is not, some peculiar practice, to carry a line, something that we've, kind of just pulled out, of the air, and think, that sounds good, we like that idea, no, this is God's design, and order, for every church, for every single person, man, and woman, who seeks, to submit, ultimately, to the authority, of God's word, and what he has to say, so let's be clear, in what we're saying, this morning, there is no place, for male superiority, within the church, and there is no place, for female inferiority, within the church, through faith in Christ, we are one in Christ, equally loved, equally treasured, equally valued, and together, as men and women, we celebrate, our diversity, we submit, to God's good design, and order, for both man, and woman, we recognise, our roles, and we take those roles, seriously, and together, we partner, one another, for the building up, and the growing, of his church, as we all, use our gifts, and complement, each other, so that together, we become, the church, that God calls us, to be, reaching out, into the community, in which we live, and building, one another up, in the faith, so, equality, diversity, and complementarity, let's pray, together, together, our Father God, we thank you, for your word, we recognise, that sometimes, it is hard, it's confusing, and difficult, and so, we especially, pray Father, that you would, by your spirit, help us, to apply, practically, to our time, and our day, the things, that we have learned, this morning, we thank you, for every person, here, for men, and women, for boys, and girls, for your good, order, and good design, for life, and we pray, that together, as your people, we would, serve one another, with the gifts, that you have given, to us, supporting, and encouraging, and building, one another up,

[36 : 38] Father, we pray, for husbands, here today, that they, we would, take our roles, seriously, that we would, care, protect, provide, that we would, nurture, our wives, that we would, give to them, all that they need, so that they, flourish, in every way, as they should, growing, in Christ, more and more, help us, if we have children, that as husbands, we would, teach our children, what it is, to follow, the Lord Jesus, and that by our lives, we would demonstrate, what it is, to live, under the authority, of Christ, Christ, and we pray, for wives, here today, we thank you, for them, thank you, for their gifting, for their roles, for their care, of children, and we pray, that to each one, you will give, all that they need, as they seek, to support, and help, and assist, their husbands, in all, that they do, father, build us, and grow us, as a church, we pray, that we would, together, give glory, and honour, to you, reflecting, your good design, in every way, we ask this, in Jesus name, amen, we're going, to sing together, a song, which,

I trust, brings together, some of the, the thing, the themes, and, that we've been, looking at, this morning, men of faith, rise up, and sing, rise up, women, of the truth, so together, we come, as God's people, equally loved, and treasured, to bring praise, and honour, to him, as we serve together, let's stand, as we sing, for full cosmetives, when we come, in most people, and hummed, there, and other ■■■■ about, the people, would come, or are all life, of the person, in some people, and in most people, who would gy Ken Nem, do live one capital.

Do happen too, or be one, or be one capital,