

Gender in Church

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Date: 08 March 2026

Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[0 : 00] Thank you that I have known, You may have a heart Look to me, I should be I can't remember I can't remember

Good morning everybody Good morning Welcome to Union Baptist this morning Great to have you with us My name is Andy I'm one of the team here at Union Let me pray as we begin our time of worship together Father, we come into your house again We come and gather as your people And God we are so thankful for that opportunity to do that And to have that opportunity to grow together And hear your voice And God as we come before you afresh today Father I pray that you will continue to speak into our lives And that you will meet us exactly where we are Amen I want to begin with some words that have been kind of synonymous I guess With some in some respects how people have been this last week or so But off the back of last week Last week we had an opportunity in our life groups to reflect a little bit on the sermon

Last week and have that opportunity to think a little bit about And having that opportunity to pray through Psalm 46 over each other And I just want to pray some of those words with us today So God is our refuge and strength Our ever present help in trouble Therefore we will not fear Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea Though its waters roar foam and the mountains quake with their searching There is a river whose streams are made glad The city of God The holy place where the most high dwells God is within her She will not fall God will help her At break of day Nations are in uproar Kingdoms fall He lifts his voice The earth melts The Lord Almighty is with us The God of Jacob is our fortress And then towards the end Be still and know that I am God I will be exalted amongst the nations I will be exalted in the earth

The Lord Almighty is with us The God of Jacob is our fortress Amen Let's stand And let's continue our worship together With the song I am who you say I am Let's stand together For the song Who might have the high school Who would welcome me

I was lost But He brought me And oh His love For me And His love For me Through the sun Shows spring Oh His Free Day I'm a child Lord God Yes I am For me We ask Thee, the ransom of me, His grace from me While I was a slave to save Him, He died for me Yes, He died for me The sun sets me, oh He's free in me I'm a child of God, yes I am

[5 : 13] In my Father's house, there's a place for me I'm a child of God, yes I am I am chosen, not forsaken, I am who You say I am You are for me, not against me, I am who You say I am I am chosen, not forsaken, I am who You say I am You are for me, not against me, I am who You say I am Yes, I am who You say I am The sun sets me, oh He's free in me

I'm a child of God, yes I am In my Father's house, there's a place for me I'm a child of God, yes I am I'm a child of God, yes I am I'm a child of God, yes I am Father, again, we're thankful for that chance to be here, to be together And God, as we're reminded of that truth of who we are, who You say we are Father, not the world around us God, I pray that You will remind us again and again this week That we are children of God

That we are Yours Or that You are the only way In Your name we pray Amen Okay, we're going to go a bit of early 2000s rush around in With our action song Lay my life down at Your feet One way, Jesus I keep my life down at Your feet You're the only one I need So to You, You are always there Show the time to You I see Show the time to You I see But You first that's all I need And I'm the Lord I am All to You One way, Jesus

You're the only one that I could inform One way, Jesus You're the only one that I could inform You're always there Every hour and every night You're always there Every hour and every night You're always there Every hour and every night You're always there There's a fancy thing You're living in You were never ever changed Yesterday's been the same Work to forever be so ever One way, Jesus Show you what I can live for

One way, Jesus Show you what I can live for One way, Jesus Show you what I can live for One way, Jesus Show you what I can live for Some way, Jesus She brought the way to truth and the light.

[9 : 54] She did not live in a night by sight for you. We're living on war with you. She brought the way to truth and the light.

We did not live in a night by sight for you. We're living on war with you. She brought the way to truth and the light.

We did not live in a night by sight for you. We're living on war with you. She brought the way to truth and the light.

We did not live in a night by sight for you. We're living on war with you. One way, Jesus.

You're the only one that I could live for. One way, Jesus. You're the only one that I could live for.

[11 : 00] One way, Jesus. You're the only one that I could live for. One way, Jesus. Because you're the only one that I can live for Okay, what I'd like you to do is I'd like you to turn to the person next to you this morning And I want you to just have a very quick conversation Say it's amazing for you to be here I'm amazed that you are here But actually, where have you seen God at work this week?

Where have you seen God at work this week? Fantastic! Okay!

One of the things we believe as a church is that part of our worship is our giving And we have that opportunity as members of his body to do that And there are lots of ways that we can do that But part of our worship to God is that opportunity to give financially, give of our time, give of our talents to God So we're going to give thanks for that There are opportunities this morning if you would like to financially support the mission that God is doing in transforming High Wycombe by God Through God through his loving, serving and worshiping church And there's an opportunity to do that both online and also we have a card reader as well Let's pray together for our offerings this morning Father, we're thankful for a chance to give to your people, to give to your service And God, I pray that as we do that, that you will bless the gifts of your people And use them to extend your kingdom here in this community and beyond

In your name we pray Amen Amen Okay, just a few notices on the 17th of March, 7.30 we have our members meeting This is a very important meeting to be a part of A chance amongst other things to vote in Some key people into leadership But also a really big and important opportunity to pray for us as a church in the mission he's called us to On the 21st of March we have Town Trail and Toasted Tea Cakes as part of our women's ministry here at UBC That starts at 2pm Check out the This Week sheet and the website or follow the QR code to register Find out for more information about that Also there's a call to prayer as well for our car park You would have noticed in the This Week sheet There's a little bit of an update on that Representatives of our leadership have been in dialogue with the council over the last 18 months

With plans to redevelop Eastern Street And there's a crucial cabinet meeting happening on Tuesday at 10am So we want to, as a church, collectively to join together to pray Particularly for that morning So during that morning, wherever you are, to pray But there's also a special opportunity We're going to meet at the Hub at 7am And we're going to prayer walk around the car park So if you would like to join us in that Or join us from wherever you are, please do so And finally we have our Easter Holiday Club coming up Which is filling up fast And kids have already signed up over half of that is full So get ahead and invite your neighbours and your friends along to that For three awesome days of fun And also if you can help with setting up and clearing down And getting drinks and bickies ready during the three days Chat to both Jackie And also chat as well Who else I've got to chat to?

[15 : 30] Who was it? Kate Rogers, that was it Kate Rogers About helping out with kind of the refreshments And serving the bickies on the day as well But to remind you all of how amazing the Holiday Club was last year Here's a little reminder video to watch Let's enjoy this together Let's enjoy this together We compete to see which team we'll reach The vote for the leader we'd love to see Get covered in gunge at the end of the week It's the I-SER-CHEESTER Holiday Club

Full of music and fun and games we love Shipwrecked on an island there's lost to explore Challenges, quizzes, singing and more The captain tells true stories from his best book Of Bible adventures It's well worth a look We learn about Jonah The one who God called But he ran away Cause he didn't want to go there at all To the city of Neville Where evil was done And Jonah thought he could hide and run So he got on a ship to escape He tried But you can't hide from God

And he supplied A massive storm and the ship nearly broke But they threw Jonah over after he spoke It's the I-SER-CHEESTER Holiday Club Full of music and fun and games we love Shipwrecked on an island there's lost to explore Challenges, quizzes, singing and more Then the sea went calm while Joe nearly drowned

He was gulped by a whale before he went down And he realized that God had been there all along And he cried out I'm sorry, forget it wrong It's the I-SER-CHEESTER Holiday Club Full of music and fun and games we love Shipwrecked on an island there's lost to explore Challenges, quizzes, singing and more Then the whale did a burp and Joe landed on land Then God told him I still want you to carry out my plan Jonah had learned now he didn't hesitate And he set off for Nineveh and he didn't wait He gave them the message to repent and change And the people of the city were never the same They said sorry to God for the things they had done He forgave them and saved them from what was to come It's the I-SER-CHEESTER Holiday Club Full of music and fun and games we love Shipwrecked on an island there's lost to explore

Challenges, quizzes, singing and more So God used Jonah who tried to deny Then he wants to use us if we think we're a guy That is no use to God we've not got what it takes But God gives us his strength and he pours out his grace Cause the story of Jonah is like a signpost To the one God sent who was more precious than most His son Jesus Christ who calls us to repent And offered forgiveness when his blood was spent Challenges, quizzes, singing and more Donuts!

Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one Four, three, two, one

What's not to love?

[20 : 04] I'm keen to bring the gunging into morning services, actually. I think that would be quite good. We're going to pray for our children and families ministry this morning.

Our children are going to head out in a moment. And so I will pray for them as they leave. But just to say that today is serving Sunday. So members of our youth band are leading the service this morning from the music.

We've got different people involved, young people serving in all sorts of different ways. So if you don't know young people, what you are serving in, then when you head through, you will find out. But there's opportunities to serve amongst our children's ministry this morning.

If you have not already registered your children, make sure that you do that at the desk as you head on through. Let me pray for our kids as they head on through today.

Father, we're thankful again for our leaders. And we're thankful for the way that they serve you week in and week out in building foundation to develop these lifelong disciples of you.

[21 : 12] And God, we pray that as they bring what they have or what you've given them today, God, I pray that you will enable them to share the various bits of and aspects of your incredible love to each and every child that is in there.

And Father, that they will hear that and continue to grow in you as they follow you. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Okay, kids.

So now is your chance to head on out. And young people, you've got that chance to head out and find out how you can serve this morning amongst our team.

And as we do that, I'm going to ask Sheena to come forward and introduce us.

We spotlight each, every now and then we'll spotlight some of our community ministries and have that opportunity to find out a little bit more about some of the stuff that takes place in the church buildings here each week.

[22 : 17] So, yeah, Sheena, I would like you to come forward and then you can share a little bit and introduce our ministry today. Thank you. Well, good morning, everybody. As Andy has just said, I am a deacon for community.

And our mission as community ministry is to meet some of the needs of our community and what we do through the night shelter and our job club, among other things.

But we also love to support other organizations and groups who are doing amazing work in our town to meet other needs. And today I have real pleasure in spotlighting the English Conversation Cafe.

And I want to introduce to you Nick Mill. We're going to hear from him. Probably, you don't realize, but they meet in our church every week on a Monday. So it's really good to hear from them about something that they're really doing on our premises.

So here we go to you, Nick. Okay. Thank you very much. And thank you very much for the opportunity to come and talk to you briefly this morning. And also thank you for the opportunity of using your lovely facilities on a Monday morning.

[23 : 25] We just meet behind here in the cafe area. And I guess where this all started from was a group of us at St Andrew's Church in Hatters Lane.

We formed something within the church called a missional community. And the idea of missional community is that it's like a small group in the sense that we get together, we worship together, we support each other.

But also we have an outreach focus as well. It might be a network, it might be a need, a neighborhood. And for us there was a sense of calling to serve those who were refugees and asylum seekers in our town.

So we set up our missional community. We felt very much that that call was something that was rooted in Scripture. The right through the Old Testament into the New Testament, there is that call, particularly for the Jews who had been slaves in Egypt, that they too should remember the stranger who resides with them in their land.

And that they should be to them as a citizen among you. And to treat the stranger as themselves. And I think very much like in the stories in the New Testament, this is very much about, it's about God's grace.

[24 : 43] There's no ifs, there's no buts, it's not querying whether this person has a right to be there. That's for the government to sort out. We have this tremendous opportunity that God has brought the nations to us, as well as a call to go out to the nations as well.

And so we felt that we wanted to take the opportunity, particularly to reach out to men. There were a number of opportunities for women to learn English within the town.

Millbrook, which offers adult education, was very oversubscribed. And so there was a real need for us to support men. So we met, two or three of us from St Andrews.

People from other churches have joined us as well to lead our Monday morning group from half past ten to twelve o'clock. And what we do is we just meet together.

The aim really is more around having conversation and chat. They're not formal lessons as such, but people coming with different levels of need. So we do have pre-prepared materials at the appropriate level.

[25 : 55] We got to the stage very quickly that we felt that it was good to introduce something of the Bible as well. Particularly perhaps for those where there was perhaps a common sort of culture with the Old Testament in particular, with those who were Muslims who were coming to the group.

So we've now got into the habit of using Bible stories every week, and asking questions and using that to improve their language, new words, but also to bring God's word to the people that we've had.

We've had about 25 contacts over the months that we've been meeting. And some people come every week. And what has been really encouraging to see is how, perhaps looking at the Bible, has prompted a number of really encouraging conversations with many people.

And it's been really humbling to get into some of their life stories and backgrounds, whether they're Christians or whether they're not, and see God working in their lives.

Just a few examples of that. We have had a number of Iranians, some of them Iranian Christians, who fled because of persecution.

[27 : 15] We had one man who's been coming regularly who's not a Christian, but his wife became a Christian in Iran, was going to the house church one day, and saw the police coming into the house.

And so he said to his wife and his son, you need to leave right away, straight away. And after many months and an incredible story, they eventually finished up at Heathrow Airport in High Wycombe. He was able to join them, but he was actually in prison for a few months in Iran. And then when the bombing started the last time, last year, he was driven from southern Iran to Istanbul to join the family.

And he's been coming each week and going to church with them as well. And we pray for him each day. We have a Turkish man who's rejected Islam, rejected religion, but he downloaded the Bible app.

He proudly says he's been reading the Bible. And also, we had a... Our target audience might be asylum seekers and refugees, but we...

[28 : 32] Anyone who wants to come. And we've actually taken one or two older couples and just getting into people's situation. Again, an Iranian couple who were just here on a visitor's visa, visiting their daughters.

Their visa ran out. It wasn't extended. Two weeks ago, they went back to Tehran. And obviously, we've not been in touch with them since. And certainly, a few weeks ago, it was just great just to stand with all the Iranians there, Christians, non-Christians, and just pray for them in their situation. And so, to get into that has been very humbling to see what people have going through, have gone through, and to be able to work with them and support them. So, my last point really is that if you feel that that's something that you want to help with, you're free on Monday mornings to come and help us.

That would be great. And also, if there's anybody that you know who you think would benefit from that kind of atmosphere of friendly chat, conversation, getting to know people to improve their English, then let them know as well.

I've got a few flyers. If you want one at the end of the service, please come and get one. But again, I just thank you for being able to use your church on a Monday to do that.

[29 : 55] The central location is great. The facilities are great. And we love coming here every Monday. Thank you very much. Let's pray for you. Father God, we thank you for this amazing work that has been called to be here.

We pray for Mick and his team and everybody else who's helping. We pray that you will infuse them with your spirit, give them wisdom and guidance. We thank you for the open door and the window into people's lives that have been provided by this opportunity.

So we just pray, Lord, for your wisdom, your blessing on the whole group as they do their work. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Okay, we're going to continue our worship now with another song.

One notice that I did forget to mention at the start. There is, somebody's mentioned that there's a car with its lights on. I think it's a key app.

GY17AKJ. I don't know if that's anybody in here. I'm sure you're really just shining for Jesus, but it won't be by the end of the service. You don't know what it's going to be. So yeah, if that is anybody here, then yeah, that's your lights on.

[31 : 12] Let's sing together these amazing words. We are a kid taken from Psalm 90. From everlasting to everlasting You are God.

Let's stand together. Let's stand together. Oh God, before the mountains were gone, O days of spring and summer filled the air, For everlasting you are God.

We dwell beneath the stars and ancient skies, A thousand years of nothing in your sight, From everlasting you are God.

And all our days are held within your hands, Your breath and light, your faith and your love.

We dwell within your wisdom on your mind, Everlasting God.

[33 : 09] You are God. You are God. You are God.

You are God.

And all our days are held within your hands, Your breath and light, your love. You are God.

We dwell within your hands, Your breath and light, your love. You are God. You are God.

You are God. You are God. Oh, my light always alerts you.

[34 : 23] But my embrace you'll make it all be clear. So satisfied, I'll take out the days.

And it's sad to share the end of my will. Forever-lasting, you are.

And all our days are held with your hand. Your worth and love will take the love of God.

We will spend the rest of your life. Ever-lasting, you are.

And all our days are held with your hand. Your worth and love will have no way.

[35 : 31] Yes, we live with the moment of love. Ever-lasting, you are.

Amen. Amen. Please do take a seat. And we're going to have our Bible. We're going to continue in our series on in one Corinthians.

Back to that today. And Ruth is going to give us our Bible reading. Followed by Andrew and your message this morning. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth.

Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth.

Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Thanks, Ruth. Okay, this morning's reading is from 1 Corinthians chapter 11, starting at verse 2.

[36 : 38] It's on page 115 in the church finals. On covering the head in worship. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding on to the traditions just as I pass them on to you.

But 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 covered dishonours his head.

Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head covered dishonours her head. It is the same as having her head shaved. But if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off.

But if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off, her head shaved, then she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God.

But woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man. And neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

[37 : 48] It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord 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 yourselves. 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 if that a woman has long hair, it is to her glory.

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

For those of you that don't know me, my name is Andrew.

[39 : 01] Together with Andy, one of the pastors here at Uni Baptist Church. Let me pray as we come into God's word together. Father God, we thank you for your word.

We pray that you would help us, particularly with this passage, as it's a difficult one. But we thank you that your whole word is important to us.

And we pray that your Holy Spirit would speak to us now. I pray that you would speak through me, Lord, and that we would understand what's important for us to hear from you this morning and how we should respond to you.

We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. So this morning we're continuing our series, which we've called the Loving, Serving, Worshipping Church, which is working right through the book of 1 Corinthians.

And chapter 11, where we've reached this morning, marks the start of a new section in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Now, whereas Paul has been talking about how the gospel affects the way they relate to one another in their kind of outer daily lives, his attention now turns to how they relate to one another when they gather for worship in a setting like this.

[40 : 13] And it's clear that there were some problems going on there that Paul is addressing. Now, if we just flip back to the last couple of verses from chapter 10 that we heard last time, it would be really helpful if you've got Bibles open.

So hopefully you can all reach a Bible. If not, there are some spares on bookcases. If you can't reach a Bible, put your hand up, and one of our amazing steward team will bring one to you. So we're on page 1152.

So we're going to look just before the passage that Ruth read to us, the previous chapter, at the end of chapter 10. And I'll just read from verse 32 and 33.

It says, Paul has been saying it's important that we consider our actions and the impact our actions have on others, so that we can have the maximum possible positive impacts on them, which is ultimately to see people saved and grow closer to Jesus and not be the opposite, not to cause a distraction or not to be a stumbling block on their journey with God.

Next week, Lynn will take us through some problems that they had in relation to celebrating communion. That's in the second half of chapter 11. But we're going to have a look at this first half of chapter 11 that was read to us by Ruth about men and women, head coverings, hair, and all that fun stuff.

[41 : 52] Now, if you're new to us or if you're visiting us this morning, you're very welcome. It's great to have you with us. We don't talk about this stuff every week. You'd probably be relieved to hear.

But we are a church who believe that the whole Bible is God's message to us. And therefore, we seek to teach the whole Bible, even though some sections of it are tricky.

And this is one such section of the Bible, which is tricky. There are several reasons it's tricky. The language itself has been quite difficult for Bible translators to know exactly how to translate, just because of the intricacies of the Greek language.

There's cultural aspects that we don't understand exactly what was going on in Corinth at the time. And the underlying theme of gender is a difficult topic for us in our current times. Now, before we talk about things which are potentially divisive, I think it's good to set out at the beginning what we can actually all agree on.

So number one, I think we can all agree that God is good. This is revealed to us throughout the Bible, most profoundly in the life of Jesus, his son, who reveals the father to us and his godness and demonstrates his love for us, especially in dying in our place.

[43 : 05] God is good and God wants the best for us. And I think it's important that we hold that when we look at difficult passages like this. Secondly, it's okay to sometimes disagree as Christians.

Now, not about everything. It's not okay to disagree about some things. For example, as Christians, we have to agree that Jesus is God's son and that he rose from the dead, for example.

But there are other things, and we've mentioned some already in this series, which are less clear cut. And people can read the same scriptures and reach different positions, and we respect that. Thirdly, people matter. Relations and differences between men and women are contested in our current context. And the topic of gender is the source of a lot of pain and confusion for many people.

And it's important that we acknowledge that there will be people among us who have been discriminated against or mistreated or undervalued because of their gender, perhaps within the context of church.

[44 : 06] And there will be some among us who have experienced some level of disconnect between who other people assume that they are and what their body seems to be and about who they are and who they feel themselves to be.

And the fourth thing that I think we can agree on is that things in the world that we live in are not working that well in the area of sex and gender. There's a lot of confusion on this topic.

There have been some positive changes over the past century, particularly in the way that women are treated in society. Christians, perhaps, have been slow to celebrate these. I just realized this morning that today is International Women's Day.

And I think that's quite apt as we look at these topics. We can celebrate some progress that has been made in honoring the place of women in our society that maybe hasn't been the case in the past.

But we have other concerning situations which are growing today. For instance, many young men moving towards really disturbing misogynistic versions of masculinity that we need to guard against.

[45 : 11] Now, as we get into the passage, I think it's helpful to point out that this passage is not about roles. It's not about who does or doesn't do which jobs within a church context.

There are other passages that speak to that. The passage mentions two roles in verse four. If you look at that, they are praying and prophesying. So publicly speaking to God and publicly speaking on behalf of God.

And men and women do both of them. So it's not so much a passage about what we do, but about the way we do what we do. Now, in simple terms, 1 Corinthians 11 says that both men and women can both pray and prophesy in the church gathering.

But they need to do that in a way which doesn't undermine the distinctions given to men and women by God. It seems that what had gone wrong in Corinth was that Christian men and women had confused the messages they're giving off about what sex they are.

It's also possible that their actions, particularly around how they dressed, was giving confusing signals in terms of marital status and potentially indicating sexual promiscuity.

[46 : 24] Why had this become a problem in Corinth? We've already seen examples in this letter of the Corinthians taking their freedom in Christ too far. And this may be an example of that.

Paul had written in Galatians 3.28 that there is neither male nor female. You are all one in Christ. Now, he meant that there are no barriers to you being welcomed into God's family and you are all equally valued.

But they may have misinterpreted this, for example, by saying we can express this freedom and the breaking down of barriers by women dressing or behaving as men and vice versa.

Now, there's been some debate because of the tricky language here about whether Paul was talking about headgear in verse 3 to 6, where it talks about the head being uncovered, or talking about hair.

That's why there's quite a lengthy footnote there. Now, from what I've read, I think it's more likely it's headgear. Most likely, a kind of veil that can either be drawn up over your head or it can be drawn down across your shoulders.

[47 : 33] Now, it seems that for the Corinthians in church, to wear this piece of cloth differently was to indicate that in church, I'm no longer prepared to be the woman or man I am in my relationships in society.

And Paul says here that men shouldn't wear this head covering when praying or prophesying and that women should. Now, I can only remember one occasion where my own head covering or lack of it caused distraction or caused issues for others.

Some years ago, my wife and I were travelling from Toronto in Canada to New York State in the USA, and we had to cross the border between Canada and the USA near Niagara Falls. And we stopped there, and it's quite a lengthy process.

They give you a ticket and you have to wait for quite a long time, then they call you into the kind of immigration hall where there's a row of about 20 immigration counters. And you go up and present your passport and so on.

And I went up, gave the guy my passport, and he looked at that and did that. And then he's got a webcam on the desk to take your photo. And he was kind of fiddling about with this, and I could see it was going up and down and kind of going in and out.

[48 : 39] And he was kind of faffing around. I was wondering what was going on. And then he said, excuse me. And then he walked over to the back of his office on his side of the desk, and he pressed the light switch, and all the lights in the whole immigration hall for these 20 counters went off.

And then he came back, and then he flicked a switch, and the little light on the webcam blinked. And then he went back, and then he turned all the lights on. And then he came back, and he said, I'm terribly sorry, sir.

There was too much light reflecting off your head to take the photo. So that was embarrassing. I've since been told by a bald friend of mine that God made a few perfect heads and the rest he covered with hair.

I've not yet found that in the Bible, but I took encouragement from that. Now, we don't know all the cultural background around this headgear that Paul was talking about.

But Paul gives three reasons for what he's saying about wearing or not wearing it, which we'll look at now, which are around honor and shame in verses 3 to 6, around the relationships between men and women in verses 7 to 12, and about what I'm calling cultural norms in verses 13 to 16.

[49 : 52] So we'll look at these in turn as we go through. So first up, honor and shame in verse 3 to 6. Have a look at verse 3. There's actually a footnote at the bottom of the Bible that explains that the words man and woman here could be translated husband and wife.

And many scholars agree that's a better translation. Paul does seem to be specifically talking about husbands and wives here. But what do we make of the word head where it says, I want you to realize the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man.

Now, this is tricky because we come to that with certain assumptions when we read a verse like that. Do you know, the most difficult Bible concepts are the ones that look the easiest.

If you come across something in the Bible that looks really weird and bizarre, like for instance, Genesis 24 verse 2, Abraham says to his servant, put your hand under my thigh.

Now, if you come across something like that, you think, what on earth is that all about? You know you don't understand it. And if you're curious enough, you look into it, you investigate it. Now, in this

case, if you were to investigate that one, you'd find out the hand under the thigh is about making a covenant.

[51 : 06] And the modern equivalent would be signing a contract. But if we come across a concept or a word that's already familiar to us, we often don't bother.

We assume that it meant the same then as it does now. And that's the case with the head metaphor that Paul is using here in these verses. Now, when we read head, I think we probably think in terms of maybe things like a head teacher or head of the armed forces, head of the police.

We think of one in charge, one who has authority. We read that through the lens of command and authority. Now, there is some truth in that, but that's not the main point that Paul was trying to make here.

It's actually about honor and shame. Now, this is a concept which is very important to people in the Eastern world, but it's not so familiar to people who've been brought up in the West.

Now, if you think about a head on a body, I'll turn here to our spotty man that we created a few weeks ago for our Corinthian series. I hope you can see that.

[52 : 10] Now, the head, you can see from this body, the head is the part of the body that kind of sticks out. It sticks above. It stands above the rest of the body.

And that's important to understand this concept. It's the bit that's prominent. And as such, it bears the honor and the shame of the rest of the body.

Now, if my arms and legs bust out, the dad moves on the dance floor and embarrass my kids, it's my head that receives the shame for that.

My head is the bit that you hold responsible if I do stupid things with the rest of my body. My head bears the consequences of what my body does. And this is a biblical pattern for the husband and wife relationship in terms of bearing the honor, bearing the shame, bearing the responsibility.

The first time that we see this is in Genesis with Adam and Eve. The responsibility for God's commission to the human race sat particularly with Adam.

[53 : 14] Adam and Eve worked together. But when they failed, it was particularly Adam who was held responsible for that. To his shame, he blamed her, abdicating the responsibility that he had been given.

Now, in verse three, Paul says a similar thing about the son and the father. The father bears the honor of the son. It's not saying that one is more important than the other, but it's the relationship is asymmetrical.

One of them doesn't relate to the other in exactly the same way as the other way around. Now, once you understand the notion of headship in these terms, it helps to make sense of verse four.

If a man prays or prophesies while wearing a veil or a hood, he dishonors his head. The one who bears the honor or shame, namely Christ. That's in verse four. And for the woman in verse five, if she prays or prophesies without wearing a veil or a hood, she dishonors her husband.

Now, if we think about this with a global perspective, a man would look disgraceful in many parts of the world if he wore a particular type of clothing or haircut. And a woman in many parts of the world would look disrespectful if she refused to wear the hijab, for example, or if she let her hair down.

[54 : 28] Now, dressing in that way would not only bring shame on her, but on her husband also.

Now, in verse six, Paul is saying if a woman has her head uncovered, she might as well go the whole way and shave her head, which is apparently what temple prostitutes did in that time.

Now, in the next section, in verses seven to 12, Paul talks about the differences between and the similarities between men and women. Paul is saying in verse seven that there are differences between men and women.

What he's not saying is that men are made in the image of God and women are not. It's very clear from Genesis 127 that men and women are made in the image of God.

But Paul is saying that men and women display the image of God in different ways. Take, for example, if I can take, for example, an apple crumble.

Now, I'm going to turn to the experts on apple crumbles here. Where's Mike? Is Mike here? Mike and Drish there? Mike and Drish are at the back. Mike and Drish, how many apple crumbles did you make last year?

[55 : 31] Any rough figure? 520. 520, seriously? Wow. I was thinking it might be north of 100, but that's amazing. Mike and Drish have an amazing apple crumble ministry and they've made over 500 apple crumbles and given them away over the last year.

Now, I want to suggest that Mike and Drish's crumble is the glory of the apple. The crumble reflects the goodness of the apple in every way and it brings honour to it.

And also that the tree that the apples come from, the apple is the glory of the apple tree. Now, none of those three, crumble, apple and tree, are superior to the other two.

Do you see the point I'm making? The point is that men and women bear God's image together and they reflect God's glory in different, but complementary ways.

Paul is also saying here that the differences between men and women stem from the fact that they were made in different ways in creation. And if men pray or prophesy while looking like women, or women pray and prophesy while looking like men, the distinctiveness of the sexes is undermined.

[56 : 42] Now, there is a particularly baffling phrase in verse 10 where it says, because of the angels. It was understood by the early church that when they gathered for worship, angels would be invisibly present, joining them to worship God.

And Paul is kind of saying, you don't want the angels to be offended by any appearances of unholiness among you. Now, verse 11 talks about the interdependence of men and women. We're not independent and we're not interchangeable as men and women. If men and women are basically the same as each other, then we don't really need each other. And we could say it's fine to have a church of all men or of all women.

But intuitively, we know that that's not right, don't we? And if men and women are not equal to each other, then we wouldn't really need each other. Now, sadly, I think this has sometimes been the case in churches where men have thought we don't really need female voices in the church.

We can do it all ourselves. But actually, if we're equal and different, then no, the men can't do it all. And neither can the women. Now, verse 12 explains that the first woman came from man in the beginning.

[57 : 51] But ever since then, men have come from women, if you think about childbirth. But more importantly, both ultimately come from God. Now, the next section, verses 13 to 16, is probably the easiest to understand.

Paul appeals to them to be wise about what the local cultural norms are. I think that's what he's getting at when he talks about the nature of things. Now, men in Corinth at that time did not normally have long hair.

Now, biblically, we can think of men who did have long hair like Samson, like Nazarites who had taken a vow in the Old Testament. So this is localized for a particular time in a particular place that Paul was writing to.

The evidence seems to suggest that in Corinth at that particular time, only slaves and prisoners would have had long hair. So Paul is saying it's kind of not helpful because that would give a wrong impression, which would be a distraction to the message of the gospel.

But it was the norm for women to have long hair, but to have it covered in most public situations.

Now, in verse 16, Paul says, if anyone wants to be contentious about this, the fact that he says that clearly some people were being contentious.

[59 : 02] And maybe they were being contentious just for the sake of being contentious. And I think some of us can be prone to that sometimes being contentious when it's not necessary, when it's not helpful. And it causes a distraction away from the gospel.

Now, having worked through all of that quite quickly, we're left with the question of how on earth do we apply this today in our setting here at Union Baptist Church in High Wycombe in 2026?

Now, some churches, not many, some churches follow Paul's instructions to the letter and will insist that women cover their heads in worship. Other churches would dismiss it altogether and say that's something cultural which has no relevance today.

But that's dangerous because if you take that approach, how do you divide the Bible into the timeless bits which we need to live by now and the cultural bits that we don't?

It's quite a dangerous concept, isn't it? We could lose whole chunks of the Bible that way. What we need to do instead is do something called symbolic translation. Physical symbols mean different things in contemporary High Wycombe and ancient Corinth.

[60 : 11] If we don't translate the symbols from one culture to another, we risk all sorts of misunderstandings. So, for example, if you go to some places in southeastern Europe, I think I'm right in saying Bulgaria and I think some parts of Albania, shaking your head from side to side like this actually means yes.

So, if you apply that symbol without translation, you will get terribly confused. You can just imagine the kind of confusion that would lead to. But if you translate this into the equivalent symbol in our culture, you get this and then you would interpret things correctly.

An example for another part of the Bible in Romans 16, Paul tells Christians to greet one another with a holy kiss in church. Now, we apply some symbolic translation here.

Our welcome team do not generally greet people with a kiss. You might be grateful for that. They might be grateful for that. But the point is that in the original culture, the kiss was how all wider family members would greet each other.

So, we translate that with the appropriate symbol the way that we would greet wider family members. So, we end up with a handshake or a hug, maybe a fist bump sometimes.

[61 : 23] We have to go through the same process in this chapter. Paul's teaching is intended to maintain distinctions between the sexes so that men look like men and women look like women.

And avoid sexually suggestive or inappropriate appearance when they gather for worship. Now, there are some broad statements that we can make for today. It's not an issue culturally for us here today for men to have long hair.

But many would feel uncomfortable if a man got up on this stage to preach or pray wearing mascara or lipstick, for example. Now, we don't expect women to dress like they're in the cast of *Pride and Prejudice*.

But they shouldn't dress like they've just come off the set of *Love Island* either. Now, going any further than that, it's very difficult for me to say definitively what Paul's teaching here translates to in our setting.

I think it would have been easier to do that, say, 40 or 50 years ago. The reason that it's difficult is that we are a multicultural church and becoming more and more so.

[62 : 23] And I'm so thankful to God for that. But each of the cultures represented here has a different symbolic language for expressing these sorts of things. Now, we had a really interesting discussion a few weeks ago in our life group, which I think has about at least five different cultural backgrounds represented.

And we were talking about what is acceptable or not acceptable in terms of clothing in church. Now, Miriam, my wife, and I used to live in Tanzania. And there we learned about the cultural norms of the people that we were working with.

And among the churches that we were working with, it would not be appropriate for Miriam to wear trousers to church. If she had done, they would have thought all kinds of things about her which weren't true. Now, similarly, it wouldn't have been appropriate for me as a man to wear shorts in church.

Boys did wear shorts. And you might have noticed my own boys brought that particular custom with them to this country, even though it wasn't climatically appropriate. But for men in Tanzania, it's actually only prisoners that wore shorts.

And it was seen as quite a shameful thing for them. So I think it's good to be aware and to have conversations. And those in life groups this week will be discussing some of that during the week.

[63 : 35] But it's a good thing for us to be aware of as we're interacting as church family with people from different cultures, that we do have different cultural language for expressing these kind of things and to be aware of that and to work that through together.

Now, in conclusion, Paul is teaching that the glory of maleness and femaleness should be represented in church gatherings. There's been progress over the years in the wider society around freedoms for women, especially in the workplace and also in legal and political rights.

But on the downside, some of that has seemed to be conditional on women doing all things like a man. That's not biblical from what we read here. Men and women are not interchangeable.

We need each other and we need each other to express our God-given maleness or femaleness. Now, the Bible actually gives us incredible freedom to express our gender in different ways.

Now, we've seen here that there are some parameters about external appearances. There are some parameters in the Bible about roles within marriage and within church leadership. We're not looking at those today, but we can be relaxed about everything else.

[64 : 43] Our identity as male and female is rooted in how God has made us. So, if you're a woman, that's because God says you're a woman and you don't have to be like other women. You don't have to fit in with stereotypes.

Same if you're a man, that's because God says you're a man. You don't have to fit with stereotypes of other men. Stereotypes are often true, but they're not always true. And they're descriptive, they're not prescriptive.

The Bible gives us freedom to not be stereotypical. The world thinks the Bible is going to be restrictive and controlling on gender. But actually, we have the most life-giving, freeing message that there is in affirming that God has made us male and female.

Our weekend event recently had the theme, be the body. Corporately, we are the body of Christ as male and females. But this applies to our individual bodies too.

Be the body, be male or female that God has made us. And lean into the unique way he's calling you to reflect his image as a man or as a woman.

[65 : 47] And when you serve and worship in church, use the language that your culture gives you to say, I embrace the femaleness or the maleness that God has given me.

Now, when we do that, what we're actually doing is acting out a picture of the gospel of Jesus, who followed the loving lead of his father and who then, as the perfect man, gave up his life for his people, the people who the Bible describes as his bride.

And one day there will be a coming together of all the complementary distinctiveness of heaven and earth, the creator and creation, Christ and his church, God and his people.

They will one day be united inseparably forever. And God invites each one of us as we grow into the loving, serving, worshipping church into that unity.

As the band come up, let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for your word to us.

[66 : 59] We thank you for the truth that you created us male and female. We pray that you'd help us to understand and embrace our differences as male and female, as we love one another, as we serve one another, as we worship you.

And Lord, I pray that you'd help us when we gather, help us not interact in any ways that could be a distraction or stumbling block to anybody growing closer to you. We pray that you would help us, give us wisdom to understand what that means in our context, as we celebrate the way you've made us as male and female and honour you and give you the glory, as we worship you and serve you as males and females.

We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks, Father. Thanks, Father. We're going to stand together and continue our worship together as his body, collectively, lets worship you and serve you.

Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him. Let's worship him.

Let's worship him. Let's worship him. I am an instrument of exaltation.

[68 : 17] I was born to lift your name above all. To live in that name of all creation.

There's a song of praise that only I can sing. Who else is born? Who else is born?

There is no one who'll need you, Jesus. Who else is born? Who else is born?

There is no one who'll need you, Jesus. You are a hymn, baby.

God of the ages. If you chose to make my heart, you'd rather pray. You healed my brokenness.

[69 : 25] Who else is born? Who else is born? So I have songs of praise that only I can sing. Who else is born?

Who else is born? Who else is born? Who else is born? There is no one who'll need you, Jesus.

Who else is born? Who else is born? Who else is born? Who else is born? There is no one who'll need you, Jesus.

Who else is born? Who else is born? Who else is born? Who else is born? is one. There is no one only in Jesus.

Who else is one? Who else is one? There is no one only in Jesus.

[70 : 39] There is no one only in Jesus.

There is no one only in Jesus. There is no one any one any one any one any one any one any one any one any one any one any one Jesus Christ, please.

Who else is worthy? Who else is worthy? There is no one, only you, Jesus.

Who else is worthy? Who else is worthy? There is no one, only you, Jesus.

There is no one, only you, Jesus. There is no one, only you, Jesus.

[72 : 34] Amen. Amen. Please do take a seat and Gary will come to mind. Thank you. Thank you.

Good morning, church. Good morning. I hope you're here. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning.

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. I hope the light reflecting of my perfectly formed head doesn't distract you. That was nice, Andrew.

Thank you. I invite you to join me at the foot of the cross, at the feet of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for being our Father. Thank you for providing a way for us to be your sons and daughters, by sending your son, Jesus, to die, to live amongst us, to be unjustly and brutally tried, abused and crucified.

[73 : 47] And Jesus died and rose and defeated sin and death, so that we can be free from the power of sin and death. Free to call you Abba, Father.

Free to call you our Savior. Thank you. Father, we're in a season where it would be normal to feel anxious and even fearful.

There's yet another war. There's instability in the global economy. There's disruption in global travel. There will be more refugees, increases in our cost of living, and heightened levels of distrust between leaders and peoples.

But during our church meeting yesterday morning, you asked us, have we forgotten? Ashamedly, I admit that sometimes I forget.

I forget that you told us that there would be wars and famines and earthquakes, that these things must happen before you return. You told us that you're telling us about these things in advance, so that we would know that you are Lord and we should not be afraid.

[75 : 08] So we thank you, Father, for gently reminding us through your Holy Spirit that you are in control. Take away any fear and anxiety.

Despite what we hear on the news and in social media, you are in control. Thank you, Father, thank you that you are the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. That you are our Father and our provider.

That every knee will one day bow to you. the tear fund organization based in the middle east sent out a video this week asking for appeal asking churches and christians to pray i believe we may see this video next week but there are three specific things they ask for us to pray about pray that god will silence the weapons and soften the hearts of leaders involved in this conflict pray for the safety and security of the tear fund workers and partners pray for the vulnerable and the voiceless so we'll do that now father you are the god of the impossible peace seems impossible so we give this request to you silence the weapons and we pray for the hearts of all the leaders that they'll have grace and wisdom we also pray for the safety of this and security of all tear fund and other charitable organizations in the area who are there to help and support the weak and the vulnerable and as we pray for those who are weak and vulnerable we also pray for the voiceless those who are often not heard but are hurt by these conflicts these are the people who are unable to flee they have nowhere to go so we ask you father to protect them we pray for the thousands of displaced people who've been driven away from their homes and their homes have been destroyed protect and provide for them father and turning our attention to our own community we pray for the work done in these buildings and by your church for the vulnerable and those in need here in high wickham the work that we do to spread your love the work that's done to introduce jesus to those who don't know him and we ask for blessings on the workers and the volunteers and and the work that's being done may your will be done and your kingdom come here on earth through the job club through wow through conversation cafe through the easter holiday club through alpha through baby and toddlers and i apologize for forgetting for forgetting any other activities but touch the hearts of all those who serve your people in our community we pray for our leadership our pastors elders deacons and their families bless them and protect them from the devil's attacks we pray for our church as a whole we are not immune to the troubles immune from the troubles of this world we we and our families are stricken by sickness and death persecution and despair just like everybody else but we thank you father for being there with us we thank you for using our troubles to shape us to be more like jesus each and every day so help us to remember your word and your promises and to keep holding on to them and hold them within our hearts and finally highlighting some specific items that are going to be happening we just ask you lord to lift we lift up the council and the imminent decision about the car park our church meeting on the 17th our search for deacons and volunteers for teams and ministries and our work with hannibal school in introducing the easter story to their children and i'll close with this exhortation from romans for i am convinced and

continue to be convinced beyond any doubt that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present and threatening nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any created thing will be able to separate us from the unlimited love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord Amen Amen Amen Thanks so much Gary uh let's stand and let's sing this song that we uh that we learned for the first time uh when we gathered as uh to share be his body uh for our weekend quite recently that we were taught Christus Victor uh with those amazing words particularly from Revelation so let's stand and let's celebrate together um! oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh A strength, a song, a show, a range of angels How to look up on the throne He's dancing on the glory mile for the battle you have won Hallelujah, amen Hosea, dwelling on our grounds

[81 : 47] Son of man, savior of sin By your blood you have redeemed us Spoken and sound, mighty Savior Who lived, who died, who was victorious Now to the Lamb upon the throne Be blessed and honor, though we bow and pour the battle you have won Hallelujah With every tribe and every tongue We join the anthem of angels in the triumph of the sun

Hallelujah, amen Oh, most of the king of the nations Broken race, crowned with Santa On that day, the world's free hope And you said, Christ the nation Who was and is and is forever To the Lamb upon the throne To the Lamb upon the throne Yes, and on the glory count on the battle you have won

Hallelujah Hallelujah With every tribe and every tongue And join the anthem of angels in the triumph of the sun Hallelujah, amen Amen, amen, amen, amen Amen, amen, amen Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen Amen, amen, amen, amen

Amen, amen, amen, amen And to the Lamb upon the throne Amen, amen, amen Alleluia. Amen. Superventory of the night. Alleluia. Amen.

[85 : 57] Alleluia. Amen. Thank you for joining us this morning.

Please do take the opportunity to continue to be the body and to come together as we have that chance to share coffee and refreshments, both at the back of the chapel and also in the welcome space here.

If you've got kids, make sure that you go grab those before you enjoy your refreshments and enjoy your coffee. Yeah, it would be great to have the opportunity as well to pray with anybody who would like prayer today, if anything within the service has touched you or whether you need prayer for any particular reason.

We've got a number of people with praying hand badges who would love to spend that time praying with you this morning. Again, myself and Andrew would also be more than happy to pray with you also.

Let me do a final blessing as we conclude our service. A reminder to pray on Tuesday in particular. Pray all week. But do pray in particular on Tuesday morning for that council meeting.

[87 : 18] And yeah, do join us in the car park for that prayer walk at 7 if you are around. Let's conclude with those words again or some of those words again from Psalm 46.

Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolation he has brought on earth. He makes war cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the shields with fire.

He says, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted amongst the nations. I will be exalted in all the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. So as the Lord goes with us this week, let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for a chance to be together and a chance to hear from your word and to share and to meet you.

And God, I pray that as we will continue on into the rest of our week. Father, I pray that we go so with that reminder that you are with us every step of the way.

[88 : 21] Father, we are so thankful to be your children, to be part of your body. And Lord, continue to use us to draw people to the hope that only you can bring.

In your name we pray. Amen. Thank you so much and we'll see you next week. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty Your majesty I've never come I lay my own Before you
now In royal room I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty
[91 : 37] I'll give you some To some of those To some of those To some of those Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.