

# Covered



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## 1<sup>ST</sup> CORINTHIANS 11 & THE CHRISTIAN USE OF HEADCOVERINGS

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INTRODUCTION

SCRIPTURE'S EXPLANATION

CHRISTIAN HEADCOVERINGS FOR TODAY?

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## Ω PREFACE

**The Apostle Paul:** “I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head... For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man... Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.”

In 1 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul provides important instructions about two symbolic practices within Christianity. The most well-known of these practices is the Lord's Supper, found in the second half of the chapter.

However, in the first half of the same chapter, Paul teaches about the relationships between God and His people. He explains that these relationships – and the glory of the Lord – are symbolically represented when men and women cover (or uncover) their heads during times of prayer.

I remember how odd this concept seemed when I first read of it in my Bible. God uses Scripture to provide His good direction in the lives of His people – but how should believers today respond to this passage? In other words, what are the interpretive issues that must be resolved in order to gain a well-grounded understanding of the Christian headcovering practice that Paul describes?

Since the Lord calls the husband to love and lead his wife (Ephesians 5:23), I eventually felt that a small part of fulfilling my

role was to gain some clarity about God's teaching in this passage. I also happened to know a few ladies who wore headcoverings in response to this passage, and my interest was further piqued when I realized that Christian men often follow Paul's instruction to uncover their heads when they pray. It was intriguing to learn that [during the last 2000 years](#), it's generally been the norm for Christian women to use headcoverings during times of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the primary reason Christians devote time to studying Scripture is to learn from God, grow in relationship with Him, and obediently follow His direction. This study<sup>2</sup> navigates the interpretive issues of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 by considering the relevant details of both the New Testament passage and First Century Corinthian culture.

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<sup>1</sup> As documented by [the writings of Christian leaders](#) across Church history, including [Augustine](#), [Martin Luther](#), [Charles Spurgeon](#), and many others.

<sup>2</sup> You are reading a condensed version of Covered Glory. The full-length study is available at [www.bitly.com/CoveredGlory](http://www.bitly.com/CoveredGlory).

## Ω WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

### *First Corinthians 11:2-16 (NASB)*

**2** Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

**3** But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

**4** Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

**5** But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

**6** For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

**7** For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

**8** For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;

**9** for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

**10** Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

**11** However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

**12** For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

**13** Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

**14** Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,

**15** but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

**16** But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

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*In this study, all instances of the word "verse"  
(or the abbreviation "v.") refer to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11.*

## Ω WHAT IS THE “HEADCOVERING”?

**Introduction.** Readers of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 often ask: What were the Corinthian woman covering their heads *with*? Most English Bibles appear to leave this question unanswered. Fortunately, a careful look at the passage provides enough insight to identify the type of headcovering Paul was referring to.

**Identity.** First, no where does Paul describe a *veil* that is to be worn over the woman's *face*. Both history & the Greek text do not support this. The passage also doesn't allow for the “covering” to symbolize *the husband*. That perspective confuses the woman's “head” (her husband, v.3) with the symbolic covering “on” her head (v.10).<sup>3</sup> Instead, the Greek terms that refer to the covering indicate that it is a cloth worn over the head. Thus, “a cloth over the head” has been Christianity's primary understanding of the passage, [from the Early Church to the present](#).

**Is It “Long Hair”?** Another proposal suggests that the woman's long hair (mentioned in v.14-15) is the only “covering” that Paul has in mind throughout the entire chapter. Verse 6, though, indicates that “long hair” is distinct from the cloth headcovering. It describes a woman who does not cover her head and who subsequently “also” cuts off her hair. At this point, the woman is missing two things: the headcovering and “also” her long hair.

<sup>3</sup> In other words, a thing that is represented by a symbol is not the same thing *as* the symbol. Similarly, the authority over the wife (v.3) is not the same thing as her *symbol* of authority (v.10).

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 shows several additional differences between the headcovering and the woman's long hair.

A woman's **long hair** is a continual covering, worn 24 hours a day. It is put on the woman's head by the Creator of nature, God Himself (v.15).

A **headcovering** is worn only “while” praying (v.5). It is a *situational* covering put on the woman's head by the woman herself (v.6).

A woman's **long hair** is somewhat innate; Paul says that it is “taught” by *nature* (v.14-15). Women usually have longer hair than men regardless of their religion.

Using a **headcovering** is not naturally intuitive – rather, it is a unique practice taught by *Scripture*. Christian women are to use it for distinctly-spiritual reasons (v.2-10).

**Long hair** is an adornment<sup>4</sup> and a “glory” (v.15).

A **headcovering** provides the opposite effect: it conceals or covers glory (v.7, 15).

In view of these various distinctions, it comes as no surprise that the woman's “covering” of hair (v.14-15) is described using a completely *different* Greek word than the woman's cloth headcovering (v.5-13).

<sup>4</sup> In v.15, the Greek word “hair” refers to an *ornamental* style.

## Ω SCRIPTURE'S REASONS FOR THE HEADCOVERING COMMANDS

Paul's instructions in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 include not only *direction* about the use of headcoverings, but also a specific *explanation* for their use. His explanation is composed of five distinct points.

1. **Distinct Gender Roles.** God's universal order of "headship" (v.3) is the topic that initiates Paul's discussion about Christian headcoverings. Paul states that the headcovering relates to distinct gender roles – roles that are rooted in God's creation of man and woman (v.8-9). The "head" of woman is man (v.3), and the head-covering is a symbol of the woman being under his "authority" (v.10).
2. **Glory & Honor.** Paul then explains the connection between *gender roles* and *communication with God*. The reason that men should not cover their heads is that they are the "glory of God" (v.7). To cover the "glory of God" *while praying* is a dishonor (v.4). The reason that women cover their heads is that they are the "glory of man" (v.7), and to uncover the "glory of man" *while praying* would be a dishonor (v.5). Essentially, Paul states that while communicating with God, it is proper for His people to symbolically "uncover" the glory of Deity (man) while symbolically "covering" the glory of humanity (woman). The Lord's glory is to be preeminent.
3. **Angels.** Paul teaches that women should cover their heads "because of the angels" (v.10). He indicates that this third reason for the headcovering is connected to his previous two reasons (*gender roles* and *glory*), but he does not further elaborate on this connection.
4. **Hair Length.** Paul points out that there is a natural distinction between men and women regarding the length of their hair. This instinctive difference hints at what Christians should do regarding the use of headcoverings (v.13-15). Paul provides for only one outcome: if a woman won't cover her head, she must cut her hair off (v.6). But since nature "teaches" that this would be a disgraceful loss of her "glory" (v.15), she should cover her head (v.6).
5. **The Universal Practice of The Church.** Christianity's use of headcoverings did not begin with Paul's letter to the Corinthians – it was already the standard practice among the other churches (v.16). It was *from* the rest of Christianity that Paul "delivered" this practice *to* the Corinthian believers (v.2) – just as he had similarly "delivered" to them the practice of the Lord's Supper (v.23). And like the symbolism of the Lord's Supper, Paul's instructions about headcovering were intended for all Christians – for "every man" and "every woman" (v.4-5).

## Ω ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE HEADCOVERING COMMANDS

As discussed in the previous section, Paul explains five specific reasons for the use of headcoverings during times of prayer. However, some Bible teachers have come up with *alternative* explanations for Paul's instructions. The most common alternative explanations are listed to the right. Each of them rests on the assumption that Paul's instructions were based on reasons *other* than the ones he gave. Below are some historical & Scriptural considerations that relate to each of these alternative explanations.

### *Common Alternative Explanations For Paul's Instructions...*

- ◆ "Headcoverings were culturally necessary for modesty, as a sign of marriage, or to avoid looking like a temple prostitute."
- ◆ "Paul's instructions were intended to prevent Christians from imitating the clothing style of pagan Roman worship."
- ◆ "In order to avoid offending the Jews, Paul desired the Corinthians to imitate Jewish headcovering practices."

### *Considerations From History*

1. **Corinthian Culture.** History tells us that the First Century city of Corinth was a Roman colony. During Paul's time, Roman men wore a headcovering during their religious activities. Roman women normally went without a headcovering in public. In nearby Greek culture, women did not wear a headcovering during worship. Rather than societal conformity, much of Paul's instructions about the headcovering contradicted the norms of Corinthian culture.
2. **Corinthian Prostitutes.** Some Bible commentators state that Paul was concerned about women dressing like the unveiled prostitutes in the Corinthian's Temple of Aphrodite. However, historical evidence shows that the lack of a headcovering was *not* a distinguishing mark of the Corinthian prostitutes. Scholars have also pointed out that the Temple was destroyed over 200 years before Paul wrote.
3. **Religion.** Did Paul simply want the Corinthians to avoid imitating pagan Roman worship, in which men wore a covering on their heads? This proposal does not provide a sufficient explanation for v.2-16. [Dr. Roy Ciampa](#) (of Gordon-Conwell Seminary) notes that "one would wonder why Paul would not have similar problems with women covering their heads, since that was also the norm for Roman worship."
4. **Testimony of Early Christianity.** Early Church theologians discussed the use of a headcoverings but never described them as a form of conformity to (or rejection of) the local Corinthian culture. Rather, multiple Early Church sources testify to the wide use of headcoverings in churches *outside* of Corinth. In fact, Tertullian (an early theologian) specifically stated that the Christian practice of headcovering was not something that came from the Gentiles.

### ***Considerations from Scripture***

1. **The Origin of The Practice.** Paul introduces the topic of headcoverings by reminding the Corinthians of the practices he “delivered” (v.2) to them. This implies that these were practices that weren't already a part of their native society. Paul ends his instructions by noting that the rest of Christianity follows the same headcovering practices (v.16). Evidently, the use of headcoverings by Christian women not a practice oriented around the Corinthian's own culture.
2. **The Focus of the Practice.** Paul gives specific theological reasons for his instructions, reasons that cannot be explained by the Corinthian's own pagan culture. Specifically, (1) Paul states that the headcovering reflects God's creation of *gender roles*. (2) He relates the use of headcoverings to the concept of *glory*. (3) Paul explains that the headcovering is worn “because of the angels” (v.10) – not “because of local society.” In view of all these dynamics, the headcovering cannot be just a reference to local Corinthian customs regarding modesty, prostitution, or marriage. Instead, the passage teaches the use of headcoverings only for times of Christian prayer and prophesy.
3. **The Jews.** The New Testament states that Christian women “ought” to wear a headcovering when praying (v.10). However, no where in the Old Testament did God require Jewish women to wear a headcovering. Further, Scripture indicates that the Corinthian church was primarily Gentile, not Jewish. Any concern that Paul had for Jewish culture does not explain the Christian practice of using a headcovering, especially for the churches *outside* of Jewish areas (see v.16). Note that prior to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Paul and other Jewish church leaders decided that they should “not trouble” Gentile Christians with the “burden” of having to follow Jewish customs – except four specific “essential” practices, none of which included the use of headcoverings (Acts 15). This is consistent with Paul's typical response of *not* requiring Christians to follow Jewish practices (Galatians 2:1-5, 14). The wording of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 provides no indication that Paul is seeking to promote the adoption of Jewish religious customs among the Corinthian Christians.

### ***Reasons for the Headcovering: Conclusions***

Each of the alternative explanations for Paul's instructions are "creative" in their attempts to find local, cultural reasons for the use of headcoverings. However, they cannot be harmonized with Scripture, nor with history. As [Dr. Darrel Bock](#) (professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) states, "Suggestions that the presence or absence of a head covering was associated with prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, pagan worship, mourning, immodesty, etc... often suffer from a lack of evidence... Moreover, they often only explain why the behavior of just one of the sexes is forbidden."

When Scripture and history disqualify these alternative proposals, they do so only as a side-effect of the fact that Paul specifically bases the practice of headcovering on *trans-cultural* issues. When discussing this dynamic, [Dr. S. Lewis Johnson](#) (former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) posed the question: "Is the head covering merely a cultural matter? That's frequently said today. We don't really have to pay much attention to this passage because this is just cultural." Dr. Johnson responded to this claim by noting that Paul's objections to the Christian woman praying without a headcovering "have nothing to do with social custom... Each of the reasons given for the wearing of a veil is taken from permanent facts... [Look at] the reasons that Paul gives for what he's talking about here... Those are not cultural reasons."

[Dr. R.C. Sproul](#) (pastor and theologian) addresses these same issues in his book "Knowing Scripture."

*Numerous commentators... [state that] the reason why Paul wanted women to cover their heads was to avoid a scandalous appearance of Christian women in the external guise of prostitutes. What is wrong with this kind of speculation? The basic problem here is that our reconstructed knowledge of first-century Corinth has led us to supply Paul with a rationale that is foreign to the one he gives himself. In a word, we are not only putting words into the apostle's mouth, but we are ignoring words that are there. If Paul merely told women in Corinth to cover their heads and gave no rationale for such instruction, we would be strongly inclined to supply it via our cultural knowledge. In this case, however, Paul provides a rationale which is based on an appeal to creation, not to the custom of Corinthian harlots. We must be careful not to let our zeal for knowledge of the culture obscure what is actually said. To subordinate Paul's stated reason to our speculatively conceived reason is to slander the apostle and turn exegesis into eisegesis."*

In summary, the practice of headcovering is a *uniquely* Christian command – especially because the *reasons* for the command are uniquely Christian. Thus, it is not surprising that God's direction for the use of headcoverings was actually *counter-cultural* for the Corinthians. The alternative explanations for v.2-16 ignore the passage's appeal to both the "universal principles" of Creation and the "universal practice" of the Church.



## Ω CHRISTIAN HEADCOVERINGS FOR TODAY?

*"This passage can't really mean what I think it says. I mean, none of the Christian women that I know use a headcovering."* This is a common reaction that many Christians have when reading 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 for the first time. However, to dismiss any Scriptural instructions requires clear, biblically-valid reasons. Those who do not follow the teaching within v.2-16 often provide one of the following four rationales.

### 1) "The Headcovering Is Meaningless In Contemporary Society: Discontinue This Obsolete Practice"

It is important to note that Scripture does not indicate that the headcovering is intended to "speak" a message to the public society. Christians recognize that all Scriptural symbolism (baptism, the Lord's Supper, headcovering) is unique and meaningful *beyond* the believer's own culture. Modern society often doesn't understand the biblical meaning of the Lord's Supper and baptism. But those whom the symbolism *is* intended for *do* understand it.<sup>5</sup>

It was noted earlier that v.2-16 are not simply a case of God requiring First Century Christians to follow First Century cultural practices. Paul *knew* that his instructions were counter-cultural. Ancient societies never used headcoverings with the same purpose, theology, or parameters as Christians did. Like Christians today, the Corinthian believers could have responded to Paul by saying, "This new practice doesn't make sense to our society." Yet, the use of headcoverings became the trans-cultural practice in [the Early Church and throughout Christian history](#).

<sup>5</sup> Paul's reasons for the headcovering were meaningful to Christians *specifically*, and only made sense from within a *Christian* perspective. The only reason that the Christian use of headcoverings has little meaning to many believers today is that in the last century Western churches generally stopped teaching its Scriptural meaning.

### 2) "The Headcovering Is Meaningless in Contemporary Culture: Choose A New, Relevant Symbol As A Replacement"

Like other Scriptural symbols, the headcovering is intentional. To signify that "man is the *head* of woman" (v.3), a Christian lady covers her *head* during prayer. Similarly, the man uncovers his *head* to show honor for his "*head*" (Jesus, v.3). Paul teaches that the *headship* dynamic is to be symbolized & visualized with the gender-appropriate use (or non-use) of the *headcovering*. [Dr. Elliot Johnson](#) (professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) commented that if a different symbol were substituted for the headcovering then there would be a "problem of losing or distorting the type of meaning."

Note that this symbol is worn "on" the head (v.10) by "every woman" (v.5) during times of "prayer" (v.5, 13). The man takes off the same thing that the woman is to put on (v.4-5). These four specifications disqualify other symbols that have been proposed as replacements (such as a dress or wedding ring). Further, in Western culture there is no symbol that points to the principles found in v.2-16. The symbol Paul gives is one that he states is universal to the churches (v.16). Christians likewise don't replace the other symbolic actions found within Scripture (such as baptism and the Lord's Supper).

### 3) "The Headcovering Symbolism Is Unnecessary – Only The Principle Behind It Counts Today"

**The Principle.** A person's "heart" matters *much* more than a person's attire. In other words, the *meaning* of a symbol is always more important than the symbol *itself*. For example, Christ's death is what saves a person, not the Lord's Supper that represents it. The thief on the cross experienced salvation (Luke 23:43), even though he was never baptized. And so Christian women are indeed able to practice the *principles* found within 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:2-16 without wearing a headcovering. Further, it is quite possible to *use* the headcovering symbol while *acting* contrary to it – just as the Corinthians misused the symbolism of the Lord's Supper (v.17-34). Similar to baptism and the Lord's Supper, the headcovering symbolism is intended to outwardly reflect an internal belief.

**The Practice.** Paul states that the use of a headcovering *reflects* the principles of v.2-16. Consequently, within Christianity the headcovering was a standard practice (v.16), not just a standard principle. The Corinthian women could have responded to Paul by saying, "Yes, I truly respect God's order of headship, and I really want His glory to be preeminent during times of prayer. God knows my heart, so I don't need something on my head to show it." Even so, Paul still directed the Corinthians to join the other churches in using a visible symbol. Christians practice the symbolic actions taught in Scripture because (1) the symbolism is meaningful, and (2) the symbolism is commanded by God's Word.

### 4) "The Passage Is Too Obscure – We Can't Understand Paul With Enough Confidence To Justify The Use of A Headcovering Today"

**Prevalence & Authority.** Many Christians have wished that the Bible contained more information about certain topics. Some of these topics are indeed "obscure" in that they are mentioned in only one or two verses. However, more than making a passing reference to the use of headcoverings, Paul devoted half of a chapter to discussing the topic. And while the use of headcoverings is not widely discussed throughout the New Testament, v.16 states that it was widely taught & practiced throughout the New Testament churches.<sup>6</sup> Some parts of v.2-16 are fairly unique, but they were inspired by God and so they have His full authority. The importance of a command can't be evaluated simply by counting up the number of times it was repeated in Scripture.

**Clarity.** Some parts of Scripture are "vague" in that they do not provide *detailed* information about a specific topic. The instructions in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:2-16 are different in several ways. First, *clarity* is Paul's goal: he begins the passage by writing, "I want you to understand" (v.3). Instead of leaving the practice of headcovering unexplained, he provided five different reasons for its existence. And rather than a societal custom understood only by the ancient culture of Corinth, Paul needed to deliver, explain, and even defend this practice to the Corinthian believers. In the passage, Paul takes *multiple* approaches in seeking to convince the Corinthians to follow his instructions. Many New Testament practices are taught without this amount of explanation.

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<sup>6</sup> Early Church artwork & writings provide [evidence](#) for this as well.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1 Corinthians 11 is full of significance... the Father, the Son, angels, authority, glory, honor, roles, unity, and symbolism. And yet, some churches follow Paul's headcovering instructions *only* because of their own traditions or culture. When tradition becomes the *primary* reason for following a biblical practice, the Word of God is de-emphasized. Also, a biblical headcovering is not intended as merely a fashion accessory, just as baptism isn't a bath and the Lord's Supper isn't meant only to relieve physical hunger. And while the Bible teaches Christian women to dress modestly, modesty is not one of the reasons given by Paul for wearing a headcovering.

Instead, Scripture teaches that the headcovering is *meaningful*. To symbolize gender roles (v.3), Christian women "ought" to cover their heads with a "symbol of authority" (v.10). Since the woman is the "glory of man" (v.7), she should symbolically cover her head when communicating with God (v.6). Even the *angels* and *nature* are connected to this symbolism (v.10, 13). Thus, Paul is not just teaching standard Christian *principles*, but is defending a standard Christian "practice" (v.16). Paul taught this practice by basing it on five foundational reasons that are still in effect today.

As [Dr. Daniel Wallace](#) (professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) wrote, "The argument that a real head covering is in view and that such is applicable today is, in some respects, the easiest view to defend exegetically and the hardest to swallow practically... The real danger, as I see it, is that many Christians simply ignore what this text says because any form of obedience to it is inconvenient."

However, obedience to Scripture is important – not only because disobedience dishonors God, but because His commands exist for a *purpose*. Paul states that the purpose of the headcovering is to honor the Lord's structure of headship and to promote His glory during communication with Him. Indeed, God's authority & glory are highly valued among His people. They are to be especially evident within marriage, a covenant intended to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

One of Jesus' concerns with the Jewish leaders of His time was that they had let go of the "commands of God" in order to "hold onto the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8-9). Similarly, it can be tempting to forgo God's direction in v.2-16 in order to maintain conformity to the norms of modern Western culture. Knowing that some Christians would resist God's instructions in this passage, the Lord inspired Paul to promote unity in the practice of headcovering: "If one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God" (v.16).

This study has considered *interpretive* issues within Corinthians 11. However, there are several *practical* issues that have not been addressed here. A supplement entitled "Practical Issues" (coming soon) seeks a biblical perspective for these topics. To gain a historical overview of the Church's response to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:2-16, consider the companion book, [Headcovering Throughout Christian History](#). Additionally, contemporary articles, testimonies, and discussion can be found at the website [www.HeadCoveringMovement.com](http://www.HeadCoveringMovement.com).

### APPENDIX: LEGALISM & GENDER EQUALITY

**Legalism?** Unbiblical *perspectives* and *rules* can be dangerous. Legalism is often an attempt to create works-based self-righteousness, rather than follow God's grace-based process of sanctification. While the term *legalism* is not found in the Bible, Scripture does warn believers against the concept.

It was appropriate, of course, for the Corinthian believers to respond with obedience to Paul's instructions regarding the use of headcoverings. But would the same response by Christians today be a form of legalism? Three types of legalism should be considered when answering this question.

**1) Legalistic Beliefs About Salvation.** The word "legalism" often describes the quest to *earn God's mercy* by living obediently and by following religious rules. This is the "classic" definition of legalism. Legalism is completely contrary to the biblical concept of *salvation by grace*, in which forgiveness is an *unearned* and *undeserved* gift from God through the death of His Son Jesus on the cross.

**2) Legalistic Unbiblical Rules.** "Legalism" can also refer to *behavioral requirements that are not found in Scripture* (without any connection to the issue of salvation). This type of legalism appears when Christians create new "moral obligations" beyond those given by God Himself in the Bible.

**3) Legalistic Biblical Rules.** "Legalism" can describe a *wrong kind of emphasis on behavior* – behavior that is otherwise biblical, right, and good. The improper emphasis is on obeying "the letter of the law" to the exclusion of "the spirit of the law." *Obedience to God* becomes divorced from *relationship with God*.

**Legalism: Conclusions.** (1) The Bible does not teach that following 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:2-16 earns God's love or forgiveness. (2) If the use of headcoverings was biblically required *only* in the Corinthian cultural context, then any other requirement for their use would indeed be legalism. However, Paul's instructions were intended for universal application. (3) The use of a headcovering can become legalistic if the Scriptural *purposes* and *principles* of the headcovering are ignored. (4) The solution to legalism is not to avoid rules. Paul, who was known for preaching against legalism and man-made traditions, still taught God's rules for Christian behavior. Jesus indicated that the solution to legalism is to honor both the Scriptural rules *and* the Scriptural principles (Matthew 23:23).

**Gender Inequality?** Headcoverings may be associated with a demeaning or repressive position for women in some cultures or religions. In the Bible, though, God's direction for how men should treat their wives is quite the opposite (Ephesians 5:25, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:7). Scripture teaches that both genders are equally made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Paul proclaims gender equality in the realm of salvation (Galatians 3:28), and in the middle of his discussion on headcoverings, he was careful to show the inter-dependence between man and woman (v.11-12). To be clear, Scripture does not describe submission as demeaning. Verse 3 teaches that men are to submit to Jesus, and that Jesus submits to the Father. As Christ submits to God and is yet equal in value, so the wife submits to the husband and is equal in value. The various New Testament teachings about the wife's submission have their foundation in God's good Creation (v.8-9, cf. Genesis 1-2).