

# **Biblical Imperatives Uncovered:**

## ***How do we know if a particular biblical command is universal or cultural?***

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May 21, 2023 ▪ Nat Porter ▪ 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

**We seek to clarify the \_\_\_\_\_ context.**

**We seek to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ context.**

**We seek to relate it to the \_\_\_\_\_ context.**

**We seek to faithfully apply it to the \_\_\_\_\_ context.**

### **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

<sup>2</sup> Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, <sup>5</sup> but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. <sup>6</sup> For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. <sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; <sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, <sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. (ESV)

## **Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions**

**Open:** What are some examples of how men's and women's attire differ from one another in our culture? Do you think these differences are good, bad, or insignificant?

**Read & Discuss:** 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

1. Given what verse 3 identifies as the "head" of a man and the "head" of a wife, who or what is Paul concerned about being "dishonored" in the matter of head coverings in verses 4-5? Many biblical scholars believe that in Roman culture at the time (especially in Corinth), women commonly wore a head covering to indicate they were married. How might this help us understand why a married woman uncovering her head in a public worship gathering would "dishonor" her husband?
2. What does Paul infer in verses 7-9 from the order of the creation account in Genesis 2 about the proper relationship between a husband and wife? How does the counterpoint in verses 11-12 help guard against a distortion or perversion of the relationship between a man and a woman seen in verses 7-10?
3. The ESV Study Bible says of verse 7 that the phrase, "'Woman is the glory of man' probably uses 'glory' in the sense of 'one who shows the excellence of.'" What is it about men *not* covering their heads but women *covering* their heads that would demonstrate the excellence of their respective "heads"? What particular aspect of this relationship does verse 10 indicate is being upheld by a woman wearing a head covering that might otherwise be put in jeopardy if she chose not to? Why do you think Paul felt this was such an important issue for him to address?
4. Do head coverings serve the same purpose in our current cultural context? If not, are there other ways we might accomplish a similar purpose in our context that head coverings served in their context?
5. Verses 14-15 indicate that hair style is connected to and serves to differentiate a man from a woman. Why would that be important? How should we determine what constitutes an appropriate hair style for a man or a woman? How does this point fit in with the larger argument Paul is making in this passage?
6. In verse 16 Paul appeals to the practice of other believers and churches. What role, if any, should the conduct of other believers and churches play in helping determine what is right for us?
7. Based on a study of this passage, what are some important questions we need to ask to ascertain if and how a biblical command applies to us, either as a universal mandate or culturally specific...
  - ...regarding the biblical/theological context?
  - ...regarding the original cultural context being addressed?
  - ...regarding the application to our own cultural context?

**Apply:** Are there places where you might be applying cultural patterns as biblical commands or treating biblical commands as cultural patterns? How can you resolve this incongruity?

**Pray:** Ask God to bless us with great discernment as we aim to appropriately apply His Word in our lives. Pray God would give us great sensitivity to the Spirit as He reveals to us the truths recorded in Scripture.