

## “Coiffures, Pompadours and Corporate Worship, Part 2” 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

### Introduction

- Last Sunday we talked about how anything that glorifies self destroys corporate worship. That question, “how does selfishness destroy worship?” has bugged me all week because I don’t feel like I adequately answered that question for you.
- The connection between selfishness and worship was illustrated for me yesterday as I was reading through Dante’s *Inferno*. In the *Inferno* Dante has a vision of what hell is like. In Dante’s hell the punishments always fit the crimes. Poetic justice. For instance, flatterers are sunk in excrement—forever feeling how their words felt to others. The gluttonous, who gave their lives to eating, are forever chewed on by Cerberus the three-headed dog. You get the point.
- As Dante makes his way through the concentric circles of hell, he comes to a place where he observes men doubled over carrying huge slabs of stone on their backs. Dante watches these poor souls walk and moan and notices that because of the stones on their backs this group is always forced to gaze downward to the ground. Dante has no idea who these people are so he questions his guide and learns that those who are forced to always gaze downward are the prideful.
- Selfishness is pride renamed. And the reason that selfishness is so destructive to worship, whether its selfishness that we see in others who lead us in worship or whether its selfishness that comes from our own hearts as we worship, is that selfishness necessarily forces our gaze downward—away from God. You cannot glorify self and glorify God at the same time. Selfishness destroys worship.

### Proposition

- **Anything that glorifies self destroys corporate worship**
- The context of 1 Corinthians 11 through chapter 14 is the corporate worship setting. Hopefully you remember that from last week. Chapters 11-14 are about worship. And I’m convinced that 11:2-16 serves as the umbrella that governs all of what Paul is going to say about worship over the next 3 ½ chapters.
- The hard part for us is recognizing how selfish our worship of God really is. And if you don’t see how we selfishly approach worship let me help you out. This is just one example of many. We as American Christians, maybe more than anything else, are consumers. It is so easy for us to saunter into a corporate worship setting with a consumer mentality—what am I going to get out of this today? Will I like the songs? Will the service fit my schedule? Will I feel edified, charged, jazzed by the worship? We come to get a fix. That’s consumerism. Worship is transformed from something that is brought and offered to God to something that is received and satisfies a need. Ultimately because of selfishness that kind of worship really isn’t worship at all.
- Listen to what [David Wells](#) says as he analyzes the current Christian landscape. Again, I want you to notice the connection between self or selfishness and what that does to worship. He writes, “The sovereignty of the self destroys the character of the church as the one people

of God who are united by a common redemption in Christ, a common identity as children by adoption of the Father, and a common understanding in his written Word. It destroys as well the worship of the God who stands outside all sinners and whose greatness and glory are the objects of their adoration. In place of God's unchanging glory, the sovereign self raises up the diversity of human need, the multiplicity of private meaning and personal expression. It is a fateful series of substitutions that we are now engineering, often with the very best of intentions, not understanding how modernity has toyed with our inner lives. The tragedy is that in the end we will find that both God and our own experience have lost all their reality, all of their weight."<sup>1</sup>

## Transition

I think in this passage, and in preparation for chapters 12, 13 and 14, Paul suggests...

### Organizational Sentence

- **Three qualities of corporate worship that demote self and glorify God**

- Again, in the first part of chapter 11, the key question is why were respectable women who would never have normally gone out in public with their heads uncovered, why were they uncovering their heads in the context of corporate worship? The answer seems to be this spirit of self-promotion and attention grabbing popularized by a movement called Sophism. The sad picture that Paul gives of the Corinthian church here is of some socially ambitious women in the church who were so hungry for status they began self-promoting through their worship. Again, the issue for Paul was not hair or even shawls. The issue, I believe, was this flagrant promotion of self that found its expression in the removal of the traditional head covering women normally wore.
- Paul counters this spirit of selfishness and self-promotion in [verses 2-6](#) with a description of the kind of worship that glorifies God—submissive worship. That was the first point from last week in case you are taking notes. **The kind of worship that pleases God is submissive** and the model for this kind of behavior is Jesus. Self-absorbed, selfish behavior cannot submit. It would have been impossible for Jesus to submit to the will of the Father and go to the cross if he were looking out for self.
- By the way, let me say an additional word about submission or subordination. There is a prevailing mindset nowadays that abhors the idea of submission because it's demeaning. But that idea is "largely a modern phenomenon" and for the most part is completely foreign to the world of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament there coexists, side by side, an equality of value and diversity of rank.<sup>3</sup> The model for husbands and wives, employers and employees, parents and children comes from Jesus—who being in his very nature God—submits to God his Head.
- Is headship abused and misapplied? You bet. Guys, if for even a second you think that as a husband being the head means your wife has to do whatever you say you're absolutely full of it. That's why [verses 11-12](#) are where they are. *In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.* "Since he argues from

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Blomberg, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Blomberg, p. 223.

hierarchy to make his case [to women] about head coverings, he needs to caution against any misapplication of what he says. Women and men are interdependent in the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> There’s much more we could say about the roles of men and women and if you’re interested in talking and working through some of these issues, talk to me. Right now though the issue at hand is worship.

- How do the concepts of submission and worship connect? Let me put it like this. When you walk into a church to worship God what you are in essence saying is that you wish to serve God by doing what He deems best, by living according to His priorities, by following His direction. Worship in and of itself is an act of submission. It is impossible to worship God without a submissive spirit.
- But it goes even farther than that. Everyone has a Head—capital H. When you walk into a corporate worship setting to worship God yet during the whole rest of your week you’ve complained about your boss or griped about your teacher or disobeyed your parents or subverted the authority of your government or rebelled against the leadership of your husband, you know what? If you haven’t confessed that, your worship mocks God. There’s something hypocritical even perverse about worship that professes submission in word and song to God on Sunday morning but denies a lifestyle of submission all the rest of the week.

### Transition

So much more could be said but we need to move on. We are now where we left off last week, verse 7. Look at [verses 7-12](#) and the [second quality](#) of corporate worship that demotes self and glorifies God. What is it? It’s this. **Worship that pleases God faithfully represents who He is.** Listen. *A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. 11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.*

### Main Points

- The key to verses 7-12 is the phrase from verse 7 *the image and glory of God*. Somehow the behavior, not only of the women but the men too, misrepresented God during corporate worship. Instead of bringing glory to God’s name they disgraced Him. They weren’t acting as proper image bearers. Their worship misrepresented God. Scary thought as we think about our corporate worship services. Let me see if I can explain what’s going on.
- As in the case of verses 2-6 background here is key. If you have a study Bible your footnote might indicate that it was normal for men in Paul’s day to uncover their heads during worship.<sup>5</sup> The Bible is inspired. However, footnotes aren’t. I don’t believe that’s correct. Archaeological evidence in the form of coins, statues, monuments from numerous Roman cities seems to indicate that liturgical head coverings for men in the context of worship were the norm.<sup>6</sup> In case you weren’t here last week we talked about how even though Corinth is a Greek city Roman culture predominated. What I’m trying to say is this. The men in

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<sup>4</sup> Garland, p. 509.

<sup>5</sup> NIV Study Bible footnote on 1 Corinthians 11:4.

<sup>6</sup> Thisleton, p. 805.

Corinthian church probably prayed and prophesied during worship with their heads covered because that was the common pattern of Roman piety at that time.

- And yet in verse 4 and again in verse 7 Paul urges the men not to wear head coverings. Why? His reason? *Since he is the image and glory of God.* Something about men wearing head coverings was improper for men to do as image bearers of God. So, two questions need to be answered in thinking about this verse. What does it mean for us as humans to bear the image of God and why, if men were to cover their heads, would that mar the image of God? First the question of image bearer.
- When the bible speaks about mankind being created in God's image it means that man is "like God and represents God."<sup>7</sup> We are like God morally, spiritually, mentally, relationally, even physically—not that God has a body—but that our bodies enable us to see and hear—things God himself does. It means that "when the Creator of the universe wanted to create something 'in his image,' something more like himself than all the rest of creation, he made us."<sup>8</sup> We represent God. And so if our behavior is inconsistent with our status as image bearers we misrepresent God. James 3:9 captures this idea when it says *with the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*
- Now think about it in the context of public worship. It's one thing to misrepresent God when in private we lie or steal or can't control our tongues. But it's a much more serious offense when image marring behavior occurs in the context of public, corporate worship. The danger is that other people will form wrong impressions about God by what they see and hear.
- Here's what I think was happening in the Corinthian church. When Paul says men, "don't cover your heads" there's a good chance he's "objecting to a practice which resembled that of Roman priests pulling their togas up over their heads while offering sacrifice or performing religious rituals."<sup>9</sup> People watching Christian men praying and prophesying with their heads covered would get the wrong idea about God—that he was somehow like all those other pagan deities. Paul wants to avoid that confusion.
- What if I were to stand up in the pulpit to preach just like any other Sunday with the exception of my clothing. What if I opened God's Word dressed as a Goth with all black attire, makeup and hair? It might confuse some people. It might confuse people about who God is.
- The application for us is pretty clear. Any behavior in the context of corporate worship that gives people an inaccurate picture of God is destructive to corporate worship. Think about our services. What parts of our culture do we import into our services that may confuse people about who God is and what he stands for? Think about the clothes we wear. Think about the words we use and the way we use them. Think about technology. Are we making it easier for people to see God or harder?

### Transition

The goal is to make it easier. The goal is to strip ourselves of anything that glorifies self so that people see more clearly the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alright, let's look at [verses](#)

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<sup>7</sup> Grudem, p. 442.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem, p. 449.

<sup>9</sup> Blomberg, p. 211.

13-16 and the **third quality** of worship that demotes self and glorifies God. **Worship that pleases God is peaceable.** Listen. *Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice--nor do the churches of God.*

- These verses rehash some of the same themes we've already talked about. What I want you to notice in particular is how Paul concludes this section in **verse 16**. Clearly for Paul the practices in the Corinthian church were causing contention—strife. *If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.* This makes perfect sense when you think about the next section and the mess that was the Lord's Supper. Or the exercising of spiritual gifts in chapter 12? Obviously the Corinthians weren't exercising doing either peaceably. Paul reminds them that as the church of God they must act peaceably when they gather for corporate worship—not contentiously stirring up trouble. Paul appeals to their sensibilities, *judge for yourselves* verse 13, and asks them to recognize that peaceable worship is the practice of all churches everywhere. Worship that pleases God is peaceable.
- It's interesting in the history of interpretation **Chrysostom** from the fifth century and **John Calvin** argue that the universal practice to which Paul appeals in these verses is “a lack of ‘delight in stirring up quarrels’ without ‘attention to truth.’”<sup>10</sup> I think they hit the nail on the head.
- To make his point about non-contentious worship Paul appeals to the nature of things. Not nature with a capital N or natural law but nature in the sense of what is proper<sup>11</sup>—what society deems to be natural.<sup>12</sup> Paul is not arguing that men must always wear short hair or that women must always wear long hair. That's just not his point. His point is that in the same way that proper men at that time had short hair and proper women at that time had long hair proper Christian worship must be peaceable. Disorderly, contentious, selfish worship shames God in the same way that, at that time, long hair shamed a man or short hair shamed a woman.
- There are good theological reasons for having an order of service for worship. That's not just personal preference but a deliberate attempt to bring order and peace to corporate worship.
- Paul is somewhat obtuse with his words here. I realize that. But I think we can at least picture corporate worship gone bad—full of contentious strife. James 3:13-18 paints both the positive and negative of what Paul is getting at here in 1 Corinthians. *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit,*

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<sup>10</sup> Thisleton, p. 847.

<sup>11</sup> Fee, p. 527.

<sup>12</sup> Garland, p. 530.

*impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*  
Doesn't that sound like a great recipe for corporate worship?

## Conclusion

- Over the next few weeks, as we continue to process and think about what it means to really worship God on his terms and in ways that please him, let me close with an illustration by [John Ortberg](#) from the *Wizard of Oz*.
- Some churches, he writes, specialize in generating emotion. The platform people are experts at moving worshipers to laughter or tears. Attendees gradually learn to evaluate the service in terms of the emotion they feel. In time, however, the law of diminishing returns sets in. Prayers are offered in highly emotive style and bathed in background music. Stories have to get more dramatic, songs more sentimental, preaching more histrionic, to keep people having intense emotional experiences. Such worship is often shallow, sometimes artificial, and rarely reflective. Little attention is given to worshiping with the mind. It produces people who have little depth or rootedness. They may develop a "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." They become worship junkies, searching for whichever church can supply the best rush. This is *Scarecrow worship*: it would be better if it only had a brain.
- On the other hand, some churches focus keenly on cognitive correctness. They recite great creeds, distribute reams of exegetical information, craft careful prayers ahead of time. And yet the heart and spirit are not seized with the wonder and passion [that should occur when encountering] the living God...Those who attend such services may be competent to spot theological error, but the unspoken truth is they're [boring]. Their worship is dry—it does not connect with their deepest hurts and desires. Rarely does it generate awe or healing, and never raucous joy. This is *Tin Man worship*: if it only had a heart.<sup>13</sup>
- I want to suggest to you that worship is obviously both. By the grace of God it's the perfect blend of head and heart—Spirit and Truth. And we must continue to strive for that balance in our corporate worship here. However, even if we were to nail that balance perfectly, it's possible to completely pervert and destroy worship through the glorification of self. Anything that glorifies, regardless of how well Spirit and Truth are balanced, destroys corporate worship. That's Paul's point in these verses. May God help us to continue to find this Spirit Truth balance and may we in our worship continue to decrease so that God alone who is worthy of our worship can increase. Let's pray.

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<sup>13</sup> John Ortberg and Pam Howell, "Can You Engage Both Heart and Mind?" Leadership (4-1-99)