

A sister in Christ writes:

I was doing a little research about the veil issue. I was just examining some random websites that had their opinions about it. Something kind of hit me that got me to thinking some more about the situation. It says in Corinthians 11:5-6, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6: For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." To me this is talking about an actual veil, right? Not hair? Because if hair is a covering, it says to shave it off if you're not covered (I guess covered by something else other than hair?). So if you don't wear a veil, you should just shave your head? It's kind of confusing here, but then it mentions the long hair is given for a covering later and to judge for yourself (which makes me think the whole thing is a Romans 14 issue). When I looked at your PowerPoint presentation on the subject, the word "for" seemed to mean "in place of." Yet verses 5 & 6 still say shave your head if you are not going to wear a covering. I could totally be confusing you right now, and I apologize. Could you kind shed a bit of light on the subject so that maybe it's a little clearer? Thanks!

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Hello sister,

Most English versions that I have seen are a bit confusing concerning 1 Cor. 11:2-14, but usually verse 15 is very clear. So, starting with the clear statement (the later part of 1 Cor. 11:15):

...long hair, it is a glory to her: for [her] hair is given her **for** a covering. (KJV)
...long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her **for** a covering. (ASV)
...long hair, [it is] glory to her; for the long hair is given [to her] **in lieu of** a veil. (DBY)
...long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her **in place of** a veil. (MKJV)
...but it is woman's glory, because her hair has been given her **instead of** a veil. (MNT)
...long hair, it is a glory to her; for [her] hair is given to her **for** a covering. (NKJV)
...long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her **for** a covering. (RSV)
...long hair, a glory it is to her, because the hair **instead of** a covering hath been given to her; (YLT)

Most versions say "**for** a covering", but a number of others nail it down very precisely as "in lieu of, instead of, in place of". This is literally what the Greek words say: long hair is given to the woman "in the place of" a

wrap. Next, notice the underlined word in "a covering" and "a veil". This word is a **noun**, a thing - literally "a wrap". This is the **only** place this noun appears in this passage. Remember this, as it will be important in a moment. So, what can we see so far? (1) We see what **is** required for women by God: long hair. (2) We see what is **not** required for women by God: a wrap or a covering.

Now for verses 2-14. The word "covering, covered" and the word "uncovered" is from the Greek word KATAKALUPTO (literally "hanging down"). In this text is **only** appears as a **verb**, not a noun. Notice how none of these words appear with "the", "a" or "an" in front. That is because the word used here is (strictly speaking) referring to **an action**. Of course something must fulfill that action, but what fulfills that action is not identified for us until verse 15. All we can see from verses 2-14 is that God has ordained that the action of "hanging down" be fulfilled in women and forbidden in men. Some preachers absolutely affirm that this verb is "a covering" or "a veil". Some assert that it is indisputably only "the hair". Well, SOMETHING must hang down, and both could fulfill the action of "hanging down". But what is focused on in these verses is not **what** hangs down, but **the principle** God established which requires a distinction between males & females. This principle of distinction is shown through the **action** of "hanging down".

Now, recall that verse 15 identified "a covering" [PERIBOLAION]. This is a different word from "covering" in verses 2-14 [KATAKALUPTO]. Peribolaion is a completely different word and it is here used as a noun. Also, a second noun is identified in verse 15, "long hair". With these details in mind, we can properly understand what Paul is writing about.

"A wrap" is obviously under consideration, for Paul mentions it in verse 15. Evidently there was some dispute at Corinth about wearing or not wearing it. Paul's reply begins by addressing the principle of distinguishing between males and females that God established (God requires the action of "hanging down" to be fulfilled in women) (v. 2-14). Then he plainly identified what God gave to fulfill that principle (the hair, not a wrap) (v. 15).

Verse 16: "But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." What would anyone be contentious about that the apostles & churches do **not** have as a custom from God? Paul just said that "a wrap" is **not** required, but long hair is. Thus, long hair **is** a custom we are to have, but "a wrap" is not. Some

(even to this day) argue that it is required and are contentious about it. But we have no such custom.

Your comments are exactly the line of thinking I have followed in studying this out. It was only when someone else pointed out to me that the word "covering" (in verses 2-14) is **a verb** that I started really understanding the principle of submission (v. 2-14) and the concluding contrast between long hair and the wrap (v. 15-16).

-Douglas

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The sister wrote back:

Thanks! So in other words if a woman does not have long hair (a male hairstyle for example), she might as well shave her head? Or is that too much of a stretch?

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You are exactly right. God wants a distinction between males and females, and that distinction (for women) is to fulfill the principle of "hanging down". This is why God gave long hair to women - in order to fulfill that action / distinction.

"Long hair" does not specify an exact length, nor is there ever a reference to "how long is long" in the Bible that I am aware of. But there should be a clear distinction between the hair of men and the hair of women. And women need to have hair that "hangs down" in order to fulfill what God requires. Obviously "a male hairstyle" on a woman is not pleasing to God.

-Douglas