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Understanding Biblical Roles -- 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

- In his book, *What's the Difference*, pastor and theologian John Piper wrote...

If I were to put my finger on one devastating sin today, it would not be the so-called women's movement, but the lack of spiritual leadership by men at home and in the church. Satan has achieved an amazing tactical victory by disseminating the notion that the summons for male leadership is born of pride and fallenness, when in fact pride is precisely what prevents spiritual leadership. The spiritual aimlessness and weakness and lethargy and loss of nerve among men is the major issue, not the upsurge of interest in women's ministries.

Pride and self-pity and fear and laziness and confusion are luring many men into self-protecting, self-exalting cocoons of silence. And to the degree that this makes room for women to take more leadership it is sometimes even endorsed as a virtue. But I believe that deep down the men—and the women—know better. Where are the men with a moral vision for their families, a zeal for the house of the Lord, a magnificent commitment to the advancement of the kingdom, an articulate dream for the mission of the church and a tenderhearted tenacity to make it real?

When the Lord visits us from on high and creates a mighty army of deeply spiritual men committed to the Word of God and a global mission, the vast majority of women will rejoice over the leadership of these men and enter into a joyful partnership that upholds and honors the beautiful Biblical pattern of mature manhood and mature womanhood. (*What's the Difference?*, John Piper, pp. 68-69).

- like much of what Piper writes, there are many powerful statements in these paragraphs...but something that really stood out to me was when he said, "pride and self-pity and fear and laziness and confusion are luring many men into self-protecting, self-exalting cocoons of silence."
- if I asked you this morning to explain how men and women are to relate to one another in the church, or in the home, or in our culture...how long would you be able to talk before you would be "out of material"?...
- and would you be able to ground what you say in the principles of Scripture?...
- and how much success are you having at walking those ideas out in real life every day?...
- thankfully there was a group of people in a local church nearly 2000 years ago...and they had similar questions—isn't that amazing...proof yet again of what Solomon said in the book of Ecclesiastes...there really is nothing new under the sun...
- but the people in that church, though they were immature in a myriad of ways...did at least one thing right...
 - they didn't remain in their confusion and ignorance about the roles of men and women in the church...
 - instead they posed questions to the apostle Paul and asked what God's Word would say about these matters...
 - and in the providence of God...we still have those answers preserved in Scripture for our instruction and admonition...and we're going to find out what the God who made us male and female has to say about all of this...
 - with that in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 11..page 135 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- we're doing a series this year entitled **Taking the Next Step...with Joy**...
 - this is a verse by verse exposition of the book of 1 Corinthians...

- sometimes when you announce that you're going to study one book of the Bible for an entire year, folks get a little nervous...as if it's going to be the same message over and over 52 times in a row...
- actually, the opposite is the case...especially with a book like 1 Corinthians...
 - now, sure, it has an overarching theme, or purpose---that's why what Pastor Aucoin had to share with us about the big picture of this book was so valuable...
 - but it also addresses dozens of different topics...
 - so for the last couple of weeks, we've been doing a comprehensive study of the issue of Christian Liberty...because chapters 8, 9, and 10 are all about that subject...
 - and the great thing about working through the Bible systematically like this is, no one could say – well, PV or one of the other pastors is upset about the way someone is using his/her liberties...so they won't go talk to that person individually---so Steve is preaching about it on Sunday...
 - that's not true – we studied Christian Liberty because it was the next thing in the text...
- the same is the case with this subject...it's not like there's some sort of an issue going on under the surface and we're trying to clean it up...
 - but here's the other side of that...it is amazing how often the Lord will time a message in a way that a person or often even a lot of persons would say – I really needed that...
 - in fact, one of the frequent comments I hear is when someone says – you were looking right at me when you were talking, weren't you?...who told you?...
 - if you've ever felt that way, you're blaming the wrong person...
 - that's the work of the Holy Spirit of God...and it's quite possible that you might need some ideas clarified and actions changed about this issue of the role of men and women in the church, the home, and the culture...
 - if that's the case, let's allow God's Word to help us...read **1 Corinthians 11:1-16**
- we're talking this morning about Understanding Biblical Roles...and with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 principles to help men and women function in a complimentary way.**
- it might be wise for me to pause and even explain that terminology.
 - I've already mentioned one book on this topic (**show pic of What's the Difference**)...these are available in the Resource Center...
 - this is actually a chapter from a larger work entitled Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (**show pic**), and subtitled A response to evangelical feminism...edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem...
 - this book is available to check out of the Resource Center—we don't have copies for sale but you could certainly find it on-line...
 - it is, as far as I know, the most comprehensive and definitive book on this subject from a biblical and theologically conservative perspective...
- Piper and Grudem coined the term “complementarity” to summarize what God's Word says about this matter...
 - and you understand—we're not talking about giving one another compliments...”you look nice today”...
 - we are talking about how God has made men and women equal yet differ...and those differences were intended to be a blessing not a burden...in a way that the role of men and the role of women would complement, or complete every person involved so that we could serve and glorify our Savior more effectively...so that's what we believe in around here...complementarity...here's three principles to help us get there...

I. Understand that Submission is a Universal Principle in God's Word.

- the word submit is not used in this passage but the concept is embedded in each of the verses...so perhaps it would be best to begin with the...

A. Meaning of submission.

- often when you read this word in our English Bibles, it is based on the Greek word **hupotasso – a military word – line up in rank under...**
- when you get a group of people together, and a decision had to be made or a direction has to be chosen...somebody has to follow somebody...
- and a willingness to do that is one of the evidences that you know Christ...
- here's a great passage that teaches that...

Ephesians 5:18-21 - And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

- that's our word hupotasso...and the way it's used here is a great illustration of how universal the concept is..."be subject to one another in the fear of Christ..."
- now if you said – well, that's because people are imperfect...submission has to be in place because of sin...that's not true...in you were following along carefully as we read...you saw a great illustration of that...

B. Necessary even in the godhead.

- v. 3 – **God is the head of Christ**
- so – true/false – Jesus was and is living in submission to the Father?...that's true...

1. Jesus went out of His way to demonstrate that He was in submission to the Father.

- **John 4:34 - Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.**
- **John 5:30 - I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**
- and there are all sorts of verses that teach that at all stages of the life and ministry of Christ...
- so that must mean that Jesus was not completely God?...absolutely not – that's the root of many heresies in the religious world...

2. The Lord was/is 100% deity, completely equal to the Father.

- **John 10:29-30 - My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.**
- these verses are a clear example of the blend...Christ's sheep were given to Him by the Father...there is a difference in role...yet He is completely equal...I and the Father are one...and if there is any question about whether His Jewish audience understood that or not...just read the next verse...**John 10:31 - The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.**
- theologians refer to this concept as "**the economic trinity**"
- **economy – "an orderly management or arrangement of parts"**
- the point of the phrase economic trinity is that even while Jesus is 100% deity, for the purposes of management and administration, there is still submission...
- if that's necessary in the godhead, you better believe it's necessary as soon as you throw in a human being or two...

- And that takes us deeper into the argument of verse 3...

C. Vital to a man's relationship to Christ.

- **v. 3 – But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man**
- well, why do you think Paul would “want them to understand” that?...
- apparently some, perhaps many of the men in that church didn’t...
- and this is a very important principle – generally speaking, when men are being submissive to Christ and the God-given authorities in their lives...the women under their sphere of influence are much more likely to joyfully submit to their God-given authorities...
- this is a passage I find myself using more and more in counseling...
- Romans 10:9-10 - that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
- now, just a couple of quick observations about what we’ve seen thus far...
 1. Everything we’ve seen thus far is entirely positive...no one is chafing about the notion that the Son is in submission to the Father, or that men are to be in submission to Christ...
 2. Also, this is motivated by love...
 - the Son loves the Father...godly men love Christ...
 3. There’s also great joy in this...there’s nothing tyrannical in all of this – an orderly management or arrangement of parts is a delightful thing...

- but the passage is also clear...submission is...

D. Foundational to the way men and women relate to one another.

- you cannot get around the point to which verse 3 is driving...
- **v. 3 – the man is the head of a woman**
- now I understand that there may be as many questions as answers at this point – that’s OK – as long as we don’t ignore the clear progression of logic...
 - the Son is in submission to the Father, men are in submission to Christ, and women (in some yet to be determined sense) are to be in submission to men...

- I think this is a good time to introduce Piper’s definitions of mature masculinity, and mature femininity...

At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships.

At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships.

[tie back to the song we used prior to the message....]

- now, there’s a lot more in this passage – but let’s just push the pause button for a moment and think about several...

E. Initial take-aways.

1. **How are you doing on the issue of being submissive to the authorities in your life?**
 - and if we asked those authorities, how would they answer on your behalf?
2. **Do you view this as a negative concept, or a positive one?**
 - do you see it as part of God’s design?...or something you simply have to endure?

3. Is it possible that some of the world's philosophies on this subject have crept into your thinking and therefore have affected your speech and behavior?

4. Do you see submission as an opportunity to be more like your Savior, and do you joyfully seek to be like Him in this critical area of your life?

- point is – verse 3 gives us a very clear and timeless principle about the place and value of submission...

- now, here's what's about to happen...in the next 3 verses, Paul is going to give a cultural application of this principle, and then he's going to come back with a series of doctrinal foundations...that wording is going to become very important in a few minutes...

- now, what are we going to do with this whole head covering thing?...here's the overall point..

II. Recognize that Some Cultural Applications of Biblical Principles May Change.

- there's several questions we need to quickly answer in order to make any sense of this...and certainly to be in a position to make contemporary applications to where we're living...

A. What is praying or prophesying?

- **v. 4 – while praying or prophesying**

- Paul is talking about a very specific ministry situation here...

- generally speaking...**prayer** means **talking to God about men**...

- and **prophesying** means **talking to man about God**...

- before the Scriptures were completed, people did prophesy in the church...and that gift was given to both men and women...

- for example – in Acts 21:9 – Phillips four unmarried daughters all had the gift of prophecy...that's undeniable...

- so Paul is talking about men praying and prophesying, and women praying and prophesying....

- now, we need to see that that was an incredible turn of events for women who lived in the Roman empire...

- often women were viewed as a slaves, or personal property...that's true in many cultures to this day...

- in response to that though, there was string feminist movement during Bible times...of women who actually attacked marriage and child-bearing as an infringement of their rights...

- so Biblical Christianity would have been a shock because women were elevated in the church...

Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 3:7 - You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- so the fact that women were praying and prophesying in any setting would have been quite an elevation in that culture...however, we have to also ask this...

B. Where was this praying or prophesying done?

- it could not have been in a formal church worship service...

- remember, we interpret Scripture in light of Scripture...

- **1 Corinthians 14:34 - The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.**

- **1 Timothy 2:12 - But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.**

- the issue isn't whether you like these verses...the issue is...they help us understand where this prophesying was, or in this case, was not occurring...

- so then the logical question is – where was it being done?...

1. Possibly a situation where a husband and wife are telling a group of people who don't know the Lord about the Savior.

2. Or, a setting in which an older woman was teaching the Word to a younger group of women.

3. Or, an occasion where a group of Christian men and women were praying together.

- so there are all sorts of examples in Scripture where women had significant

- now, the question was – how would God's divine order articulated in verse 3 play itself out in this particular scenario?...that brings us to...

C. What was the head covering?

- what Paul is talking about here is a full veil, worn by both unsaved and saved women in that culture...

- and you know that practice is still followed in many middle eastern countries...

- and if you asked any women why she did that – she could tell you the cultural significance (whether she liked it or not)...it was to signify that she would not expose herself to other men, and that her beauties and charms were reserved for her husband...

- so two summary ideas:

1) Paul was talking about something that was to be done in connection with public ministries of the church...not worship services, but other ministry settings...

2) We're clearly talking about a cultural issue...

- everybody in Corinth understood the significance of the veil...

- and Paul says – yes, women can minister in many settings, but because of the universal principle of submission---she should wear a veil...and men should not...

- now, the \$100 question is...

D. What are the possible ways to view a passage like this?

1. Cut it all out.

- clearly we're talking about a principle of submission, and a cultural application of a veil---some people would say – I don't like either so we're cutting it all out.

2. Add to it and doctor it up.

- some use this passage to say a woman should have her head covered 7 days a week, but they don't have to wear a full veil, it can be something smaller than that...

- and we're not criticizing people who do that – many come to this church who do that – we just have to point out – you can't use this text to justify that

3. The whole thing is cultural

- some would say, not only is the veil cultural, but so is the position of submission of women in the church in any way...

- that's why some churches have female pastors, etc.

4. Principle of submission is unchanging, the cultural application of wearing a veil may change from culture to culture.

5. The whole passage, both the principle and the cultural application, are binding today.

- so they would say – it's only for ministry settings, but an American woman doing ministry should wear a full veil...
- now, which position do you think we take here?...(#4)...
- but think about this – some of these positions are better than others...
- in fact, I think if you're not going to take the position that we hold...then your only other acceptable position is to get the full veils out...
- we're not going to say that's it's all cultural (we'll explain that more in a minute)
- so if a person is going to say – none of it's cultural, then your only choice is to insist on full veils, and I don't know any Christian group in this country who insists on that...

- now I realize that some might say – PV, I'm not sure I'm comfortable saying that we shouldn't be insisting on this veil thing – I don't like saying that some things are cultural...
- OK – if you're a man – how about on the way out – I give you a big juicy smooch?...
- and by the way, some churches (not many) still practice that...
- well, guys kissing guys communicates a different message in this culture, does it not?...
- some things are cultural...

E. How do we know if a practice is cultural or not?

1. Is this practice unique to a particular geographic area?

2. Is this practice unique to this period of time?

- in this case, the answer regarding the veil issue is clearly "yes"

3. Would continuing this practice be counterproductive to the work of the Lord?

- I think the answer to this one would be yes as well – because people in our culture would not understand the point of the veil...

4. Does the practice itself have moral significance or is the issue really what the practice represents?

- there's no moral significance to a veil – It covers up your nose...everybody has one, they're just noses...

- now, if you say---well then, why don't we trash the whole thing?...let's throw out submission as well...Paul really helps us on that one...because in verses 8-9, he tethers all of this back to unchanging doctrine...the cultural application may change, but the underlying principle never does...

III. Don't Confuse Changing Cultural Applications with Principles Based on Changeless Biblical Truth.

A. Whom they are to glorify.

- v. 7 – the woman is the glory of man

- when a woman joyfully receives the leadership of a godly husband, or women in the church joyfully receive the leadership of godly men---that focuses attention on men who are fulfilling their God-given role and in turn glorifying God who designed the sexes in this way...

B. Order of creation.

- v. 8 – Man does not originate from woman, but woman from man

C. Purpose of creation

- 1 Corinthians 11:9 - for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

D. Take-aways for men.**1. Be spiritual leaders.**

- [develop – the difference in response between a woman standing up and challenging me publically, and a man sleeping through the sermon)

2. Don't minimize the value and potential effectiveness of the spiritual ministry women have in our church within biblical guidelines.**E. Take-aways for men.****1. Look for opportunities to demonstrate your submission in the church and the home.**

- [develop – one nice thing for me today – I'm not aware of one problem we have with women in this area – the women in our church are more than happy to be led by a group of spirit-filled men]

2. Rejoice in your freedom to serve and minister

- [develop opportunities this fall...]