Text: I Corinthians 11:2-16
Title: "Dress Codes and Gender Roles" Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles again this morning to I Corinthians 11:2-16. Last week I began a message I've entitled "Dress Codes and Gender Roles." And I said that this is one of the most complicated passages in the Bible. Scholars debate this and are in disagreement as to what it means. Part of the problem for us today is that the first letter to the Corinthian church is Paul's answer to several questions that were posed to him by the leaders of the church. The problem is that we don't know exactly what the questions were. We've got the answers, but we're not told specifically what the questions were. And that's what makes this passage difficult. But, as I said, the Holy Spirit has inspired this and with His help I think we can get to the truth that God wants us to have today.

Apparently there was some confusion in the church about how men and women should act in church. And in the atmosphere of liberty without limits that existed in Corinth, women were presenting themselves in a way that were not becoming of godly women, and apparently the same was happening with certain men. And it wasn't just about *apparel* and *appearances*, it was about *attitude*.

Note: Because of the influence of certain groups in our culture today, there's much confusion in our nation about the unique way that God created males and females, and how that uniqueness is to be expressed in marriage and in families.

> **ILLUSTRATION** – And the songs of our culture bear this out. Several years ago Helen Reddy recorded a song that became the national anthem of the radical feminist movement called "I am Woman, Hear Me Roar." And on the other side you've got hip hop artists who rap lyrics that are so incredibly demeaning to women. They see women as little better than animals.

We need the truth of God's word to interject sanity into this madness.

And so there was this age old struggle going over the roles of men and women in the family and in the church. So to set things straight Paul wades into this controversial subject and lays out some practical counsel that is built upon some principles that span every culture, every society, and every generation.

By way of review from last week, here's the first principle.

PRINCIPLE #1 – THE <u>TRINITY</u> IS OUR PATTERN FOR RELATIONSHIPS (v.3).

1 Corinthians 11:3 (NIV) - Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Now in this verse we get some important information about who God is, and how He created humans. You see God is One, but He exists in the form of what we call the Trinity. God is three

persons … Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And within the Trinity between these three persons we see some very interesting things:

- We see the incredible energy of the love flowing within that circle. God is love. And that love is shared equally between the Three. They honor and glorify one another.
- But we also see that there are functions that each of the three Persons of the Trinity perform. God the Father is the ultimate Head of all the universe. It says that "the head of Christ is God." They are equal and one in every way, and yet the Son submits to the authority of the Father. And then there is the Holy Spirit who is called the Helper or Comforter in the NT.

So they are all One, all God, all equal, and yet they have roles that they play within the Godhead.

And we must remember this when it comes to the roles of men and women. God created us in His image. His own Person is the pattern for creating humankind.

God created men with certain attributes in mind; and He created women with certain attributes in mind. And as Christ honors the authority of His Head, the Father, so the woman (wife) is to honor the authority of her head, who is the man (husband).

Now let's move on to the next principle found in this passage.

PRINCIPLE #2 – MEN AND WOMEN ARE TO RESPECT GODLY <u>AUTHORITY</u> (vv.4-6).

1 Corinthians 11:4-6 (NIV) - Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. [5] And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. [6] If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.

This whole business about head coverings is difficult to understand because we don't know exactly what was happening with head coverings. But we can discern that it apparently had something to do with demonstrating submission to authority.

Apparently, the way a man demonstrated submission to his head, Christ, was to pray and prophesy with his head uncovered.

> Note: Today in Jerusalem when you see men praying at the Western Wall, they have a shawl over their heads. That practice, scholars tell us, didn't come into practice until hundreds of years after biblical times. Apparently a man was not to pray with his head covered.

In biblical times a woman would wear some kind of head covering to acknowledge her honoring of her head, that is her husband. This many have been veils or shawls that signified that her beauty and charms were intended for one man, her husband. So this was the proper way for her to honor her husbands responsibility over her.

So what Paul is saying is that men and women should *show* their respect for authority. Women dressed and wore their hair in such a way to say that they were not ashamed to be a woman under submission to authority.

Now what about this business of shaved heads for women? That was a sign, in the ancient culture, of depravity and immorality. Generally, a shaved head for a woman was a way of disgracing a woman.

> So the principle here is that the women dressed in such as way as to say, "I'm not a lesbian and I'm not a prostitute. I understand and rejoice that God made me a woman and I gladly take my place in God's order of things under the authority of my husband and the other people whom God has charged to lead me."

Now what about the guidelines for men? The men are to dress in church as men demonstrating they are under Christ's authority. And the way they did that in the NT culture was to *not* cover their heads. And in doing that to embrace their role as men and exercise their responsibility to lead.

And that leads to the next principle.

PRINCIPLE #3 – MEN MUST EMBRACE THEIR <u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u> (vv.7-10).

1 Corinthians 11:7-9 (NIV) - 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.

Remember, these head coverings for women, and the absence of head coverings for men, were apparently a symbol of submission to authority in this ancient culture. But the idea of men being the "head" of their wives and the wife submitting to his leadership is not rooted in some ancient culture that has disappeared, but it is rooted in the way God created things to work from the beginning.

- **"Man … is the image and glory of God."** God created man first, in His own image and, it says here, in His glory. And a man should live as one who bears the image and the glory of God. It's a great thing to be a man. So men should not shy away from their role of leadership. God made you to step up and fulfill your responsibility
- **"The woman is the glory of man."** Now what does that mean? Well the explanation is in the next verses. The woman was made from and for the man. What a glorious thing God has created *from* man and *for* man.

Now, again, I can hear some women saying, "That's ridiculous. That's not the way I see it." Well, it's the way God sees it. It's not demeaning to view women in this regard … as a "helper" created for man. Just as it is not demeaning to the Holy Spirit to call Him the "helper" in the Godhead.

1 Corinthians 11:10 (NIV) - For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

I don't have time to deal with this verse, but it may have something to do with the rebellion of the angels who ultimately became demons. If so, it's underscoring the importance of honoring the authorities that God has placed over us all.

Alright, let's go to the next principle.

PRINCIPLE #4 – MEN AND WOMEN <u>NEED</u> EACH OTHER (vv.11-12).

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 (NIV) - 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.

This relates to the Christian standard for marriage … "In the Lord…" God has a way that He wants marriages to work, and the best way for that to happen is for the marriage to be "in the Lord." The husband and wife are both believers and they both function under the authority of Jesus Christ.

One is not better than the other. The wife is not independent of her husband, and the husband is not independent of the wife. After all, the first woman came from the man, and ever since then every man comes from the woman.

This interdependence must happen in the church. We need men and women to be what God has created them to be if the church is be all that it should be. I understand that as the senior pastor, I am in an office that the Bible prescribes should be held by a male. But I'm not better than the women in our church. My ministry would not be complete without the role that women play.

> Note: The Gospels tell us that Jesus depended heavily on the twelve men who were designated apostles, but He also depended heavily on a group of women who followed Him and assisted in His ministry.

And this interdependence must happen in the marriage as well. Independence in marriage is not a good thing. I see this so often. She has her career, he has his career. She has her money, he has his money. She has her friends, he has his friends. Eventually, she has her divorce attorney, he has his divorce attorney.

Marriage partners are not supposed to be independent, but interdependent. We need each other.

PRINCIPLE #5 – MEN SHOULD BE <u>MASCULINE</u>; WOMEN SHOULD BE <u>FEMININE</u> (vv.13-15).

1 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NIV) - 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.

Note: Here again, we see some cultural differences that are being dealt with long hair in one culture may mean one thing, and in another, something totally different. But this isn't about hair exclusively.

Physiologically, women typically have a lot of hair, and men don't have as much hair. This has to do with the way women's bodies function differently from the way men's bodies function. The result is that typically women grow their hair longer and it rarely falls out. Men can grow long hair to a point, but not like women. And often as men, our hair falls out.

> So nature didn't intend for men and women to look alike. Men should be masculine and women should be feminine.
>
> So guys, if you're going to wear a kilt, you must weigh at least 200 pounds and grow a big beard so there's no mistaking.

Men should be men and women should be women. That's the way God created things to function. If God made you a man, don't despise being a man? If God made you a woman, don't despise being a woman?

Now what if someone says, "I don't buy that." What do we say?

PRINCIPLE #6 – THE BIBLE'S TEACHING IS <u>RELEVANT</u> FOR EVERY SITUATION (v.16).

Sometimes people read these verses and think, "Oh, that was 2000 years ago. Everything is different now. It's arrogant for us to think that 2000 years ago they were ignorant. We know better now. Really?

1 Corinthians 11:16 (NIV) - If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

If someone wants to be contentious about this, there's no biblical alternative. You can't just go to another church and find a place where the principle doesn't apply.

Here's what he's saying: God made us male and female. Sin came into the picture. Now some people are confused about their gender and the roles that men and women are to play.

Church, what America needs is to see the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ living under the authority of God's Word. Then and only then will our witness to a lost, dark society be complete.