

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Biblicalearning.org

Dr. Gary Meadors' Lecture 25 on 1 Corinthians 11:2-34 addresses Paul's response to questions regarding public worship, specifically focusing on the roles of males and females in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. Meadors highlights this chapter as particularly challenging to interpret due to **ambiguous language and modern debates on gender**. The lecture aims to provide a **basic reading of the text**, considering historical and cultural contexts, and acknowledging differing scholarly viewpoints, including hierarchical, complementarian, and egalitarian perspectives. Meadors emphasizes the importance of understanding the **original meaning** before applying contemporary interpretations and notes the significance of "traditions" (paradoseis) in Paul's teaching.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).**



**Meadors_1Cor_Sess
ion25.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2

Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in Lecture 25 of his series on 1 Corinthians, focusing on chapter 11, verses 2-16, which addresses questions of public worship and the roles of men and women within it. Meadors emphasizes the challenging nature of this chapter for interpretation due to ambiguous language, historical and cultural context, and the significant interest from organizations involved in the gender debate. He advocates for a careful and nuanced reading of the text within its original context, cautioning against imposing modern agendas and theological frameworks too early in the interpretative process.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Context and Purpose of 1 Corinthians 11:

- This section (11:2-34) responds to questions about public worship raised by the Corinthians in their written communication to Paul (mentioned in 7:1).
- Chapter 11 covers two main topics: male and female roles in public worship (11:2-16) and gatherings around the Lord's Supper (11:17-34).
- The absence of the introductory phrase "peri de" (concerning) at the beginning of chapter 11 raises the question of whether the Corinthians specifically asked about this issue or if Paul is addressing a known problem.
- Meadors stresses the complexity of interpreting this passage, involving historical and cultural backgrounds, the meaning of specific terms, and the immediate context of the letter.

1. Structure and Approaches to Interpretation:

- Meadors highlights the diverse structural analyses offered by scholars like Fee (egalitarian), Fitzmeyer (traditional Catholic), and Garland (progressive egalitarian). These structures help illustrate the flow of the text and identify key verses.

- Fee divides the passage into three parts: the overall issue (11:3-6), the explanation of man and woman (11:7-12), and a call for discernment (11:13-16).
- Fitzmeyer sees a programmatic statement in verse 3, Paul's thesis in verses 4-6, an explanatory argument in verses 7-9, a concluding statement in verse 10 (emphasizing the "authority on/over her head" and the "because of the angels" phrase), a qualifying counter-argument in verses 11-12, and an admonition in verse 16.
- Garland proposes a chiasmic structure, with verse 10 ("a woman ought to have authority over her head") as the central assertion.
- Meadors emphasizes the importance of a basic reading of the text before delving into historical-cultural reconstructions and the gender debate.

1. **The Significance of "Traditions" (Paradoseis) in Verse 2:**

- Paul praises the Corinthians for "holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you" (11:2).
- The term "traditions" (paradoseis) is not negative in the Bible; it refers to the authoritative transmission of religious instruction, both in Judaism (oral transmission) and in the early church.
- Paul is presented not as being counter-tradition, but rather upholding and enhancing true traditions.
- These traditions are described as "prescriptive" (normative truths to be believed) rather than merely "descriptive" (how the early church operated in specific contexts).
- Meadors suggests that while the created distinctions between male and female are presented as canonical and non-negotiable, the specific nature of the "cover" might be more customary and descriptive.

1. **Women's Participation in Public Worship:**

- Meadors emphasizes that this passage, particularly verse 5 ("But every woman who prays or prophesies"), authorizes women to participate in public worship by praying and prophesying.
- However, this participation is qualified by the manner in which they do so, specifically regarding the covering of their heads.

- The central focus of the passage (verses 7-12) is not primarily about the relationship between men and women, but rather how both relate to God in public worship. The key statement is "everything comes from God" (11:12).
- Paul's aim is not to silence women but to ensure their self-expression in worship respects the created distinctions and protects God's glory in creation.

1. **The Symbolism of the Worshipper's Head:**

- The interpretation of terms and their relationships, particularly the meaning of "head" (kephale), is a major point of debate.
- Meadors notes the significant repetition of the word "head" (10 times in verses 3-10), highlighting its importance.
- A crucial question is whether "head" is used literally or metaphorically in different contexts within the passage.
- Two main interpretations of metaphorical "head" are discussed:
- **Authority/Hierarchical:** This view, often held by hierarchalists (some who identify as complementarian), sees "head" as implying the subordination of women to men and male leadership in the home and church. Wayne Grudem is mentioned as a prominent proponent of this view through extensive word studies.
- **Source/Origin:** This view, often held by egalitarians and some complementarians, argues that "head" refers to the source or origin of one being from another (Christ from God, woman from man). Charlie Martin and Troy Martin are mentioned as scholars who have challenged the exclusive "authority" interpretation by demonstrating "source" as a valid meaning of "kephale" in Greek literature, including medical texts. Meadors notes that context is the final arbiter of a word's meaning, not simply the frequency of its usage.

1. **The Significance of Head Covering for Men (Verse 4):**

- Meadors raises the question of why a man covering his head would dishonor his head, given Old Testament and Jewish traditions where head coverings were sometimes associated with reverence.
- He introduces Richard Oster's article, which provides a historical-cultural explanation related to Roman worship practices. Roman men, especially elites and the Caesar, would cover their heads with their toga ("capite velato") as a gesture of homage to deities.

- Therefore, for a Christian man to cover his head in worship could be seen as syncretism with Roman religious practices.
- Additionally, since "man is the glory of God," his head should not be covered in worship symbolism.

1. **The Significance of Head Covering for Women (Verse 5):**

- Drawing an analogy with the reasoning for men, Meadors suggests that women in Roman culture were veiled due to marriage and humility.
- In the church, the veiling of women could be related to the symbolism of woman's head being "the glory of man," and that man's glory should not be prominent in worship focused on God.

1. **Caution Against Agenda Hermeneutics:**

- Meadors repeatedly warns against allowing the modern gender debate to distort the interpretation of the text. He emphasizes the importance of a "plain reading of the text in its context" before applying pre-conceived theological agendas.
- He discusses the contested ownership of the term "complementarian," noting how some hierarchalists have adopted and redefined it, leading to confusion. He prefers the term "hierarchalist" for those who see inherent hierarchical structures based on gender.

Quotes:

- "In many ways, 1 Corinthians 11 may be the most challenging chapter in the book of 1 Corinthians for interpretation."
- "Some of it relates to some ambiguity of phrases and terms as to what they meant in Paul's time and space."
- "Some of it is due to the large interest in this chapter from major organizations in the gender debate, particularly in the USA. They have perhaps created as many problems sometimes in interpretation as they have solved..."
- "Paul presents created sex distinctions as canonical and non-negotiable. He views, however, the issues of cover as customary."
- "The question is not how men and women relate to each other as much as it is how do men and women relate to God in public worship. That's the crucial point in this text."

- "Man is the glory of God, woman is the glory of man. And that's going to have a lot to do with why a woman is covered in a man. It's not about man to woman, woman to man. It's about each of them to God."
- "All meaning resides in context. Words get their meaning from context, and that is absolutely crucial in hermeneutics."
- "Roman men worshipped with their heads covered, especially the elite and the Caesars. This devotional gesture quote was known as capite volato."
- "So, for a Christian man to be covered would be syncretism."
- "...women were also veiled in the church because their head was the symbol of man, the glory of man, and man's glory ought not to be prominent in worship."

Next Steps (as indicated by Meadors):

- The next lecture will continue with 1 Corinthians 11, starting from verse 5 on page 140 of the notes.
- Students are encouraged to read their notes, conduct further research, and educate themselves on the complexities of this passage.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Study Guide

Key Themes: Public Worship, Male and Female Roles, Headship, Tradition, Cultural Context, Interpretation of Scripture

Quiz:

1. According to Dr. Meadors, why is 1 Corinthians 11 a particularly challenging chapter for interpretation?
2. What two main aspects of public worship in 1 Corinthians 11 does Paul address?
3. Dr. Meadors discusses different scholarly approaches to the structure of this passage. Name two scholars and briefly describe their approach (e.g., by paragraphs, programmatic statements).
4. In 1 Corinthians 11:2, Paul praises the Corinthians for what actions regarding his teachings? What is the Greek term for "traditions" used here?
5. What is the significance of the term "head" (kephale) in 1 Corinthians 11:3, and what are the two main interpretations discussed by Dr. Meadors?
6. According to Fitzmyer, what are two of the reasons why a woman should not pray or prophesy with an uncovered head in the cultic assembly?
7. How does Garland, in contrast to a hierarchical view, interpret Paul's intention in ordering women in public worship in this passage?
8. What does Dr. Meadors suggest is the central focus of the passage concerning male and female roles in public worship, as indicated in verse 12?
9. What is the significance of Roman men covering their heads during worship, and how does this relate to Paul's instruction for men in 1 Corinthians 11?
10. According to Dr. Meadors, what was the customary reason for women to be veiled in Roman culture, and how might this connect to the practice in the early church?

Answer Key:

1. Dr. Meadors states that the chapter is challenging due to the ambiguity of some phrases and terms from Paul's time, as well as the significant interest and influence of major organizations involved in the modern gender debate.
2. Paul addresses the roles of males and females in public worship (11:2-16) and the church's gatherings around the Lord's Supper (11:17-34).
3. Fee structures the passage in three parts based on paragraph divisions in the NIV, focusing on the explanation of man and woman, the problem of public worship, and a call for discernment. Fitzmyer breaks it down into smaller pieces, such as the programmatic statement in verse 3 and Paul's thesis in verses 4-6.
4. Paul praises them for remembering him in everything and for holding to the traditions just as he passed them on. The Greek term for "traditions" is *paradoseis*.
5. The term "head" (kephale) in verse 3 is a metaphor for the relationship between God, Christ, man, and woman. The two main interpretations discussed are "authority/ruler/hierarchical" and "source/origin."
6. According to Fitzmyer, two reasons are the order of creation (woman created for man, thus the glory of man should be covered) and the theological ordered headship of God, Christ, man, and woman calling for veiling.
7. Garland suggests that Paul is not attempting to establish a gender hierarchy but is merely ordering women in public worship within their cultural sensitivities.
8. Dr. Meadors indicates that the central focus is not how men and women relate to each other, but how both relate to God in public worship, emphasizing the statement in verse 12 that "everything comes from God."
9. Roman men, especially elites and Caesars, covered their heads with their toga (capite velato) as a gesture of homage to deities. For Christian men, being covered in worship could be seen as syncretism and contradict the symbolism of man being the glory of God.
10. In Roman culture, women were veiled as a sign of marriage and humility. In the church, this practice may have also related to the symbolism of woman's head representing man, and the desire not to prominently display man's glory in worship.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the term "tradition" (*paradosis*) in 1 Corinthians 11:2, considering its use in Judaism and early Christianity. How does Paul's appeal to tradition set the stage for his discussion of male and female roles in worship?
2. Compare and contrast the "authority/hierarchical" and "source/origin" interpretations of "head" (*kephale*) in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Discuss the implications of each interpretation for understanding the relationship between men and women in the church and home.
3. Evaluate the importance of considering the historical and cultural context of Corinth in interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. How do practices like Roman male head-covering and societal views on women's veiling potentially shed light on Paul's instructions?
4. Discuss the challenges of interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in light of contemporary debates about gender roles in the church. How can readers avoid "agenda hermeneutics" and strive for a more faithful understanding of the text in its original context?
5. Examine Dr. Meadors' caution against overemphasizing modern gender debates when approaching 1 Corinthians 11. What does he suggest as a more appropriate initial approach to understanding this challenging passage, and why is it important?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Paradoseis (παραδόσεις):** Greek term meaning "traditions" or "teachings that have been handed down." In the New Testament, it often refers to authoritative instruction, both oral and written.
- **Kephale (κεφαλή):** Greek term meaning "head." In 1 Corinthians 11, its metaphorical use is debated, with interpretations ranging from "authority/ruler" to "source/origin."
- **Hierarchicalist:** In the context of gender debates, this view emphasizes a divinely ordained order where men have authority over women in the church and home.
- **Egalitarian:** This view emphasizes the fundamental equality of men and women in all areas of life, including the church and home, often minimizing or reinterpreting traditional gender roles.
- **Complementarian:** This view typically holds that men and women are equal in value but have different, complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home. Dr. Meadors notes the term's contested meaning.
- **Public Worship:** The gathering of the Christian community for corporate prayer, teaching, singing, and other expressions of devotion to God.
- **Syncretism:** The combination or attempted combination of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. In this context, it refers to Christian practices aligning with pagan Roman religious customs.
- **Agenda Hermeneutics:** Interpreting scripture through the lens of a pre-existing agenda or set of beliefs, potentially distorting the original meaning of the text.
- **Metanarrative:** An overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for people's beliefs and understandings. In this context, the overarching story of the Bible from creation to redemption.
- **Cultic Assembly:** A gathering for religious worship or rites. Dr. Meadors uses this term to describe the early church's meetings.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 25, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, BiblicaleLearning.org

Frequently Asked Questions on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

1. Why does Dr. Meadors consider 1 Corinthians 11 a particularly challenging chapter for interpretation? Dr. Meadors highlights several reasons for the difficulty in interpreting 1 Corinthians 11. Firstly, there's ambiguity in some of the phrases and terms used by Paul, making it hard to ascertain their precise meaning in the first-century context. Secondly, the chapter has become a focal point in contemporary gender debates, particularly in the USA, which has sometimes led to interpretations driven by pre-existing agendas rather than a careful reading of the text itself. Finally, the complexity arises from the need to simultaneously consider historical and cultural backgrounds, the specific meanings of key terms, and the immediate context of Paul's letter.

2. What is the overall context of 1 Corinthians 11:2-34, according to the lecture? The overarching context of this section of 1 Corinthians is Paul's response to questions concerning public worship in the Corinthian church. Specifically, the first part (verses 2-16) addresses the roles and practices of males and females in public worship, while the latter half of the chapter discusses the church's gatherings around the Lord's Supper. Dr. Meadors notes that despite some debate, the prevailing view is that Paul is addressing the church when it is gathered together for worship.

3. What does Paul mean by "traditions" (paradoseis) in 1 Corinthians 11:2? In this context, "traditions" (paradoseis) refers to the authoritative transmission of religious instruction, a technical term used in both Judaism and the early church. These traditions were not necessarily originated by Paul himself but were handed down as established oral teachings within the Christian community, drawing from both Jewish heritage and early Christian instruction. Dr. Meadors emphasizes that Paul views these traditions as having a prescriptive, normative quality, indicating how believers should conduct themselves.

4. What are the different perspectives (hierarchical, complementarian, egalitarian) mentioned in the lecture regarding the roles of men and women, and how do they relate to the interpretation of this chapter?

The lecture identifies three main perspectives on gender roles that significantly influence the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11: hierarchical, complementarian, and egalitarian. Hierarchalists believe in a divinely ordained structure where men have authority over women. Egalitarians advocate for the fundamental equality of men and women in all areas of life and ministry, often downplaying created distinctions in terms of authority. Complementarianism is presented as a more middle-ground position, though Dr. Meadors notes it has become a contested term, with some hierarchalists adopting it to soften their views. These differing viewpoints often lead to selective emphasis on certain aspects of the text and different interpretations of key terms like "head."

5. What are the two main interpretations of the Greek word "kephale" (head) discussed in relation to 1 Corinthians 11:3, and how do these interpretations impact the understanding of the passage?

Two primary interpretations of "kephale" are discussed: (1) "ruler" or "authority," which is often favored by those with a hierarchical or some complementarian viewpoints, suggesting a relationship of subordination of women to men, mirroring Christ's authority over man and God's authority over Christ. (2) "source" or "origin," which is often supported by egalitarians and some complementarians, emphasizing that woman originated from man and Christ from God, focusing on a relational rather than an authoritative dynamic. The choice between these interpretations significantly shapes how one understands the power dynamics and roles described in the passage.

6. What is the significance of Roman cultural practices, particularly regarding head coverings, in understanding 1 Corinthians 11:4-5? Dr. Meadors highlights the Roman cultural context of Corinth to shed light on the issue of head coverings. In Roman society, it was customary for men, especially during worship, to pull their toga over their heads as a sign of homage to their deities (capite velato). Conversely, women often wore veils as symbols of marriage and humility. In the Christian context, for men to cover their heads during worship might have been seen as syncretistic, aligning them with Roman religious practices and obscuring the idea that man is the glory of God. For women, the veiling in church may have been related to cultural norms of modesty and the symbolic representation of man as the glory of man, suggesting that man's glory should not be prominent in worship.

7. According to the lecture, is Paul prescribing or describing practices related to male and female roles in worship in 1 Corinthians 11? Dr. Meadors suggests that Paul is likely presenting the created sex distinctions as canonical and non-negotiable, thus prescribing a normative understanding of male and female roles grounded in Genesis. However, he indicates that the specific nature of the "cover" for women might be more related to custom and thus potentially more descriptive of their specific cultural context. He argues that the underlying tradition (paradoseis) concerning male and female distinctions is prescriptive, while the application of that tradition through customs like veiling may be more context-dependent.

8. What is presented as the central focus of the discussion in 1 Corinthians 11 regarding men and women in worship? Dr. Meadors emphasizes that the crucial point of this text is not primarily about how men and women relate to each other but rather how both men and women relate to God in public worship. The discussion about headship and coverings is ultimately about protecting God's glory in creation and ensuring that the way men and women participate in worship reflects the created distinctions in a manner that honors God. The terminal statement in verse 12 ("everything comes from God") underscores this central focus.