

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 26, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Part 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 26, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture, the second part of his analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, explores Paul's instructions regarding male and female roles in public worship. The lecture meticulously examines the passage, considering the cultural context of Roman Corinth, including the veiling practices of men and women and the emergence of "new Roman women." **Meadors discusses various interpretations of the head covering, its symbolism, and the significance of the "glory of God" and "glory of man" in relation to worship.** He highlights the importance of understanding the text within its first-century setting and cautions against imposing modern gender debates onto the passage. **The lecture also addresses the complexities of translating key terms and the differing views on the contentious verse 16 regarding custom or practice.** Ultimately, Meadors encourages a careful and humble approach to interpreting this challenging passage by prioritizing the text and its historical context before engaging with diverse theological viewpoints.

2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 26 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).



Meadors_1Cor_Session26.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 26, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Part 2

Briefing Document: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 - Male and Female in Public Worship

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture (Lecture 26) on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, focusing on Paul's response to questions of public worship and the roles of males and females within that context. Meadors emphasizes the complexity of the passage, highlighting the importance of understanding the historical and cultural background, the theological implications related to the creation narrative, and the various interpretations surrounding the practice of head coverings. He cautions against dogmatism and encourages a careful reading of the text before engaging with the extensive literature on gender debates.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Contextual Background:

- **Roman Influence:** Meadors highlights the significant influence of Roman culture on Corinth, suggesting that some practices within the Christian assembly might have been reactions to or syncretism with Roman norms. He notes that Roman men sometimes covered their heads during religious officiation (syncretism to be avoided for Christians, as "man is the glory of Christ"), while married Roman women typically veiled themselves in public as a sign of their marital status.
- **New Roman Women:** Meadors introduces Bruce Winter's proposal regarding "new Roman women" who were asserting more independence and challenging traditional patriarchal norms. This cultural shift might have influenced whether Christian women in Corinth chose to veil themselves in public worship.
- **Problematic Behavior:** Paul's discussion likely arose due to some breach of protocol within the Corinthian assembly regarding head coverings for men and/or women.

2. The Issue of Head Coverings:

- **Men Uncovered:** Paul states that men should not cover their heads in worship because "he is the image and glory of God" (1 Corinthians 11:7). Covering his head could be seen as dishonoring his "head," which is Christ.

- **Women Covered:** Paul states that women who pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered dishonor their heads, equating it to having their heads shaved (1 Corinthians 11:5).
- **Nature of the Cover:** Meadors clarifies that the covering for women was likely some form of veil but "certainly has nothing to do with the face, as in Islamic cultures." The Greek word for a simple hat or veil is not used in this passage. The terminology used relates more to the act of "having down the head" (kata kephales).
- **Interpretations of the Cover:** Meadors outlines various interpretations of what the "cover" might be:
 - A literal veil or hat (held by groups like Mennonites, Amish, and some Reformed/Russian Orthodox).
 - A culturally bound practice no longer binding today.
 - A woman's long hair (considered unlikely by Meadors).
 - Related to how hair is fixed on the head (a popular earlier view).
 - Related to cultural aspects of Roman religion.
 - Related to the "new Roman women" issue and culturally bound.

3. Theological Basis: Glory and the Creation Narrative:

- **Man as Glory of God, Woman as Glory of Man:** Meadors emphasizes the imagery Paul uses: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man" (1 Corinthians 11:7).
- **Order of Creation (Genesis):** Paul draws upon the creation account: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).
- **Focus on God in Worship:** The primary point, according to Meadors, is how men and women image themselves before God in public worship. The covering for women is not about their subjection to men but about ensuring that the focus in worship is on God, not on the glory of man reflected through an uncovered woman.
- **Authority (exousia) on the Head:** Verse 10 states, "That is why a wife ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels." Meadors discusses the

translation of "authority" (exousia) and the preposition "on" (epi), noting how different translations interpret this (power on, symbol of authority, sign of authority, authority over). He suggests it relates to the woman's right and privilege to participate in public worship when properly aligned with the creation imagery.

4. The Role of Angels:

- Meadors explains that the reference to angels is often interpreted as them being observers and "policemen of creation," caretakers of the created pattern and present in worship. The covering of the woman's head ensures that the angels are not misled or offended by a display of man's glory that could distract from the glory of God.

5. Mutuality and Equality:

- Meadors highlights verses 11-12: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. And all things are from God." This emphasizes the interrelationship and equality of men and women before God, even within the context of different roles in worship.

6. Argument from Nature (Long Hair):

- Paul argues, "Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:14-15). Meadors interprets this as an argument by analogy, not identity. Long hair is typically a natural covering for women, contrasting with men's shorter hair, mirroring the principle of women being covered and men uncovered in worship.

7. The Contentious Verse (11:16):

- Meadors discusses the varying translations of verse 16: "If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" (NRSV) vs. "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God" (NIV 2011).
- "No such custom" could imply the practice Paul was criticizing (women being uncovered) is not acceptable.
- "No other practice" could imply that the tradition of women being covered is the established norm in all churches and should be followed.

- Meadors leans towards the interpretation that Paul, while emphasizing the creation motif, might have been addressing the contentious nature of the Corinthian context and asserting the consistent practice of the churches as a whole.

8. Tone and Purpose of the Passage:

- Meadors notes the gentler tone of 11:2-16 compared to the more forceful language used in 11:17-34 regarding the Lord's Supper. This suggests that while Paul considered the issue of worship order important, it might not have been as grave as the problems related to heresy or the abuse of the Lord's Supper.
- The primary purpose of the passage is to address how males and females should image themselves before God in public worship, rooted in the biblical creation narrative.

9. Hermeneutical Considerations:

- Meadors stresses the importance of studying the text within its historical and cultural context, utilizing primary Roman and Greek sources.
- He cautions against importing modern gender debates and agendas into the interpretation of this passage.
- He emphasizes the need for humility in interpretation, acknowledging the wide range of views and the complexities of the text.
- He recommends consulting primary sources and representatives of different viewpoints (e.g., Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Christians for Biblical Equality) to understand the various perspectives on gender roles in the church.

Key Quotes:

- "When we stopped, we talked about 11.4, the issue of a man dishonoring his head by being covered, and that that cover most likely relates to Roman religion. And that for him to do that, to pull the toga up over his head would be syncretism. He shouldn't do it. And furthermore, he shouldn't do it because man is the glory of Christ."
- "Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. It is the same as having her head shaved."

- "The woman's head is the glory of man, and Paul argues it should be covered because man shouldn't be the focus of the assembly, but God should be the focus for both the male and the female."
- "Man does not cover his head in worship because he is the glory of God. The woman covers her head because she is the glory of man within the larger biblical narrative, even back to Genesis."
- "Her head must be covered not because she is in the presence of man but because she's in the presence of God."
- "For from far from being a symbol of the woman's subjection to man, that is the veil. Therefore, her head covering is what Paul calls authority. It gives her authority. In prayer and prophesying, she, like the man, is under the authority of God."
- "If Paul were writing this section today, how would he frame it? What would be prescriptive? What would be descriptive? What would be the created pattern? What would be custom?"
- "The context of 1 Corinthians 11 requires that it be translated wife. The mention of a veil and the headship analogy requires it. Plutarch's advice to the bride and groom indicates that a woman began to practice veiling with marriage. So, this text is addressing husbands and wives in public worship, not men and women generically."

Conclusion:

Dr. Meadors' lecture provides a nuanced and historically informed approach to understanding 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. He emphasizes the importance of considering the Roman cultural context, the theological significance of the creation narrative and the concept of glory, and the diverse interpretations of key terms and practices. He encourages a careful and humble engagement with the text, prioritizing its primary focus on worship before delving into contemporary debates about gender roles. The lecture highlights the complexity of the passage and the need for thorough research and discernment in its interpretation.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 26, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Part 2

Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Key Themes:

- Public worship practices in the early church.
- The significance of head coverings for men and women in the assembly.
- Paul's use of creation imagery (Genesis) to explain these practices.
- The relationship between "glory" and worship.
- The interpretation of "authority" (exousia) in relation to women and head coverings.
- The role of cultural context (Roman society) in understanding Paul's instructions.
- The meaning and implications of 1 Corinthians 11:16 regarding custom and practice.
- The presence and potential concern of angels in the worship setting.
- The mutuality and interdependence of men and women in the Lord (11:11-12).
- The distinction between tradition (delivered in 11:2) and custom (noted in 11:16).

Quiz:

1. According to Meadors, what was the likely significance of a man covering his head in the Corinthian assembly, and why did Paul object to it?
2. How does Paul describe a woman dishonoring her head if she prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, according to 1 Corinthians 11:5? What analogy does he use?
3. Meadors discusses various interpretations of what the "cover" for women might have been. Briefly describe two of these interpretations, and explain why the idea that it was simply long hair is considered unlikely.
4. According to Meadors' interpretation of Hooker's analysis, why does Paul say a woman should cover her head in worship? What is the focus of this instruction?

5. Explain the different ways the word "authority" (*exousia*) has been translated in 1 Corinthians 11:10, and why Meadors suggests it relates to a woman's right or privilege to participate in public worship.
6. What is the significance of the phrase "on account of the angels" in 1 Corinthians 11:10, according to Meadors' preferred understanding?
7. How does Meadors explain Paul's argument from nature in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 regarding long hair for men and women? Is this meant to be a direct command about hair length today?
8. Discuss the two main interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:16 ("we have no such custom" vs. "we have no other practice") and their potential implications for understanding Paul's overall point.
9. According to Meadors, how did the social practice of veiling relate to married women in Roman culture, and how might this context inform Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11?
10. What is the crucial difference Meadors highlights between the tone and content of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 compared to 11:17-34? What does this suggest about the nature of the issues Paul is addressing in each section?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. Meadors suggests that a man covering his head likely related to Roman religious practices and pulling the toga over the head was an act of syncretism. Paul objected to this because man is the glory of Christ and should not symbolically cover that glory in worship.
2. Paul states that a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, and he equates this to having her head shaved. This was considered a sign of shame in the cultural context.
3. Two interpretations include a literal veil or hat-type covering seen in some contemporary religious groups, and the idea that it related to how women's hair was fixed or styled. The long hair theory is unlikely because Paul seems to present long hair as something a woman *has* for a covering, not as the required covering itself, and because hair length varies.
4. According to Hooker's analysis as presented by Meadors, a woman should cover her head in worship not primarily due to submission to man, but because she is the glory of man, and in God's presence, the focus should be on God's glory, not

man's. The covering allows her to participate in prayer and prophecy without inappropriately reflecting man's glory.

5. "Authority" has been translated as "power on," "symbol of authority," "sign of authority," and "authority over." Meadors suggests it relates to a woman's right or privilege to participate in public worship, enabled by the covering which signifies the effacement of man's glory in God's presence.
6. Meadors understands "on account of the angels" to refer to the angels as observers and caretakers of God's created order and the domain of worship. The woman's covering ensures the angels are not misled into focusing on or inappropriately worshiping man (represented by the uncovered woman) instead of God.
7. Meadors explains that Paul uses an analogy from nature: just as men typically have short hair and women typically have long hair (reflecting a natural distinction), so too men should not cover their heads in worship while women should. This is not a prescriptive command about hair length today but an analogical argument for the principle of covering in that cultural context.
8. "No such custom" could imply that there was no existing practice of women praying uncovered that Paul needed to address, suggesting the covering was expected. "No other practice" suggests that the practice of women covering their heads was already established in the churches, implying it should be followed. The latter interpretation is currently more widely accepted.
9. In Roman culture, married women typically veiled themselves in public as a sign of their marital status and modesty. This cultural context suggests that Paul's instruction could have been addressing a situation where Christian wives in house churches were deviating from this norm, potentially causing offense or blurring distinctions with non-married or less reputable women.
10. Meadors points out that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has a gentler, more discussion-oriented tone, moving from praise to propriety, while 11:17-34, dealing with issues of the Lord's Supper, is unequivocally commanding and lacks praise. This suggests the issue of head coverings was perhaps a matter of cultural sensitivity and proper worship order, rather than a fundamental heresy.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the various interpretations of the head covering in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 presented by Meadors, considering the cultural, textual, and theological arguments for each. Discuss which interpretation you find most compelling and why.
2. Explore the significance of the creation narrative in Genesis as it informs Paul's arguments about head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, according to Meadors' lecture. How does the concept of "glory" relate to this imagery?
3. Discuss the challenges of interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in a contemporary context, considering the cultural differences between the first century and today. How should modern readers approach this passage, according to Meadors' insights on historical and hermeneutical considerations?
4. Evaluate the role of cultural norms in understanding Paul's instructions regarding head coverings. To what extent were Paul's directives specific to the social context of Roman Corinth, and what principles (if any) might transcend those specific circumstances?
5. Analyze the contrasting interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:10 ("authority on her head because of the angels") and 11:16 ("no such custom/no other practice"). How do these challenging verses impact our overall understanding of Paul's teaching in this passage regarding male and female roles in public worship?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Syncretism:** The combining of different religious beliefs and practices. In this context, a man covering his head could be seen as adopting a Roman religious custom.
- **Toga:** A distinctive garment worn by Roman citizens, including the practice of pulling it over the head during religious or official ceremonies.
- **Kata Kephales:** A Greek phrase meaning "down the head" which was used in contemporary literature to describe something resting on the head, including head coverings.
- **Liturgical Settings:** Relating to public religious worship or ceremonies.

- **Nomenclature:** A system of names or terms used in a particular science, art, or discipline. Here, referring to the common usage of Greek words.
- **Protocol:** Established customs or accepted behavior in a particular social or professional setting.
- **Normative Pattern:** A standard or ideal way of doing things. In this context, Paul's view of how men and women should appear before God in worship.
- **Descriptive Text:** Writing that aims to describe or represent something as it is, without prescribing rules.
- **Prescriptive Text:** Writing that aims to lay down rules or guidelines that should be followed.
- **Metaphorical Head:** In the context of Paul's imagery, man is the metaphorical head as the glory of God, and woman is the glory of man, with a relationship akin to a metaphorical head.
- **Doxa:** The Greek word for "glory," which is central to Paul's argument about how men and women image God and man in worship.
- **Exousia:** The Greek word often translated as "authority," but which Meadors suggests could also mean "right," "power," or "privilege" in this context.
- **Epi:** A Greek preposition that can mean "on" or "over," leading to different interpretations of "authority upon her head."
- **Gender-Driven Hermeneutics:** An approach to interpreting scripture that is heavily influenced by pre-existing views or agendas regarding the roles and relationships of men and women.
- **Dia Touta:** A Greek phrase meaning "for this reason," indicating a logical connection to the preceding points.
- **Gune:** A Greek word that can mean either "woman" or "wife," the precise meaning depending on the context.
- **Oner:** A Greek word that can mean either "man" or "husband," with the context determining the specific meaning.
- **Household Codes:** Passages in the New Testament that address the roles and responsibilities within a household, such as those between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves.

- **Patriarchalism:** A social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, property ownership, and control of family.
- **Ecclesia:** A Greek word commonly translated as "church," but which originally referred to a political assembly of citizens.
- **Paradosis (Paradicis):** A Greek term meaning "tradition," often referring to authoritative teachings or practices that have been handed down.
- **Ethical Obligation:** A moral duty or requirement. Meadors points to the strong Greek verb used to signify this in relation to the social conventions of veiling.
- **Canon Law:** The body of laws and regulations made by ecclesiastical authority (church leadership) for the government of a Christian organization or church and its members.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 26, Response to Worship Question, 1 Cor. 11:2, Part 2, BiblicaleLearning.org

What was the initial cultural context surrounding the discussion of head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11?

The issue of head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11 arose within the specific cultural context of first-century Roman Corinth. For men, covering the head, particularly by pulling the toga over it, was associated with Roman religious practices, making it a potential act of syncretism if done in Christian worship. For women, it was the common practice for married Roman women to wear a modest head covering in public, signifying their marital status. The emergence of "new Roman women" who challenged traditional social norms, including the wearing of veils, might have also contributed to the controversy within the Corinthian church.

According to the lecture, what is the primary theological argument Paul makes regarding head coverings for men and women in worship?

Paul's main theological argument is rooted in the creation narrative of Genesis. He states that man is the image and glory of God and should therefore not cover his head in worship. Woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man and should cover her head so that the glory of man does not become the focus in worship but rather the glory of God. This isn't about male superiority or female subjugation, but about maintaining the proper focus on God during public worship and reflecting the created order in how men and women image God.

The lecture discusses various interpretations of what the "cover" for women might have been. What are some of these interpretations?

The lecture outlines several interpretations of the head covering for women: (1) a literal veil or hat, which some groups continue to practice today; (2) a cultural practice that was relevant then but is no longer binding; (3) a woman's long hair itself; (4) the way a woman's hair was styled; (5) a practice related to certain aspects of Roman religion; and (6) a response to the "new Roman women" issue and therefore culturally specific to that time.

What is the significance of the phrase "authority on her head" in relation to women and worship, according to the lecture?

The phrase "authority on her head" (ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς) is a point of much debate. The lecture highlights that many translations add words like "symbol" or "sign" to "authority," implying the woman is under the authority of man. However, the lecture, drawing on Morna Hooker's analysis, suggests that the covering itself *is* the authority or right for a woman to participate in public prayer and prophecy. By covering her head and obscuring the glory of man, she is rightly related to God in worship and empowered to actively participate.

What is the explanation provided in the lecture for the phrase "because of the angels"?

The phrase "because of the angels" has multiple interpretations. The lecture favors the view that the angels are seen as observers and guardians of God's created order and the proper conduct of worship. The covering of the woman's head ensures that the angels are not misled into focusing on the glory of man instead of God. It aligns with imagery where even angels show reverence to God by veiling themselves metaphorically.

How does the lecture interpret Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:15 about long hair being given to a woman for a covering?

The lecture interprets Paul's statement about long hair as an argument from analogy, not identity. It suggests that just as nature shows a distinction between men (typically shorter hair, uncovered in worship) and women (typically longer hair, covered in worship), this natural distinction points analogically to the propriety of women wearing a head covering when praying or prophesying. It is not meant to imply that long hair *is* the sufficient covering in place of a veil or other head covering.

What are the two main interpretations discussed in the lecture regarding Paul's concluding statement in 1 Corinthians 11:16 ("we have no such custom" or "we have no other practice")?

The lecture presents two primary interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:16. One interpretation of "no such custom" suggests that Paul is dismissing the contentious behavior of those who might resist his teaching on head coverings. The other, often translated as "no other practice," implies that the practice of head coverings in worship is a consistent tradition among all the churches of God and should be followed. The lecture notes that while "no such custom" aligns more closely with the literal Greek, "no other practice" has become more prevalent in modern translations and interpretations, emphasizing adherence to established church practice.

How does the lecture emphasize approaching the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16?

The lecture strongly emphasizes the importance of first understanding the text itself within its historical and cultural context, particularly the Roman setting. It cautions against immediately imposing modern gender debates (egalitarianism, complementarianism, hierarchicalism) onto the passage. The lecture advocates for a careful examination of the theological arguments related to creation and the symbolism of glory in worship, before delving into the myriad of secondary literature and differing interpretations. It encourages humility in interpretation and recognizing the potential for personal biases to influence understanding.