

Does Hair Matter to God?

Reflecting God's Glory and order in our hair appearance

by Michel Danis

In *1 Corinthians 11:1*, the Apostle Paul writes, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” This powerful call to follow his example raises a meaningful question for those who take Scripture at face value: If Paul imitated Christ in life and doctrine, what can we infer about his appearance—specifically, his hair length? And by extension, what does this suggest about Christ Himself?

The surrounding passage, *1 Corinthians 11:1–16*, makes clear that Paul’s teaching on hair length is not based on shifting cultural customs but on God’s unchanging created order. He explains that man, being the image and glory of God, is to reflect that glory by keeping his head uncovered and his hair short (v. 7). In contrast, woman is described as the glory of man, and her long hair is given to her as a natural covering and a sign of honor and submission (vv. 7–15).

These gender-specific distinctions are rooted in divine symbolism and authority. They visually reinforce God’s design for male headship and female honor within His created order. As such, Paul’s instruction is theological, not merely practical.

If Paul upheld these truths in his personal life as an imitator of Christ, it follows that Christ, too, honored these divine distinctions—suggesting He would not have worn long hair, contrary to many modern portrayals. Understanding these outward signs as reflections of deeper spiritual realities calls believers to align their appearance with God’s revealed pattern of identity, authority, and honor.

Foundational Truth of God’s order

In *1 Corinthians 11:3*, Paul lays out a foundational truth about God’s established order:

“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Paul begins with the authority of Christ over every man to emphasize the principle of **submission and order**. He had just said, *“Imitate me as I imitate Christ,”* highlighting that even he, as an apostle, was under Christ’s authority. This sets the stage for understanding how divine authority flows—from God the Father to Christ, from Christ to man, and from man to woman.

This verse is not rooted in cultural norms of the first-century Roman world but in the **timeless, divine structure of the family** as established by God. Paul shows that this order reflects God’s nature as a **God of authority, order, and design**. Even Christ submits to the Father—not because He is lesser, but because of divine structure and unity of purpose.

Paul’s reasoning, as explained in the following verses, is not based on Roman custom but grounded in **creation itself**, showing that these truths transcend time and culture.

As it is unnatural and sinful for a man to have sexual relations with another man (Romans 1:26–27), Paul mentioned it is likewise *contrary to nature* for a man to grow his hair long or for a woman to cut hers short. These outward expressions matter because they either uphold or reject the gender distinctions that God ordained from the beginning.

Ultimately, Paul’s teaching reinforces enduring truths about **gender roles, authority, and how we are to honor God**—even in how we present ourselves. Therefore, if Paul imitated Christ and taught that men should have short hair, it stands to reason that Christ Himself had short hair, perfectly aligned with God’s created order.

Proper Hair Lengths and Styles in God’s Church

Almost every artistic portrayal of Jesus shows Him with long hair. But is this depiction accurate? Can we know what Jesus actually looked like—and more importantly, does the Bible give guidance on acceptable hair lengths and styles for men and women?

Surprisingly to some, Scripture and history provide clear answers.

Historical Evidence Supports Short Hair

Historical and archaeological evidence overwhelmingly confirms that short hair was the norm for men during Christ’s time. Sculptures, busts, and coins from the Greco-Roman world—including those depicting Augustus, Pompey, and Herod—consistently show men with short hair. Roman emperors, soldiers, and leaders all wore their hair closely cropped. It would have been considered strange and out of place for a man, especially one in public or religious life, to have long hair.

Two well-regarded historical references support this:

- *A History of the Holy Land* (Michael Avi-Yonah, ed.), pages 126–127
- *Daniel to Paul* (Gaalyahu Cornfeld, ed.)

Both include images and commentary confirming the short hairstyles of men in that era, including Jews.

Jewish Men and Short Hair

Even among the Jews, short hair was common. Ancient depictions of biblical figures like David and Ezra show them with short hair. For example:

1. *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* (Nathan Ausubel), Crown Publishers, New York, 1964, pp. 25–26, shows short-haired depictions of Jewish figures from 250 A.D.
2. *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cecil Roth, ed.), editor, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York, 1966, article "Art," p. 167, shows third-century Jews with short hair as well.

Coins and busts of Herod Agrippa I, a king and religious Jew during the time of the early Church, also display him with short hair.

The Influence of Hellenistic Culture

By the time of Christ, Judea had been deeply influenced by Hellenistic (Greek) culture, which valued short hair on men. Many Jews spoke Greek and adopted aspects of this culture (John 12:20; Acts 6:1). Historical references (Cornfeld, pp. 15, 146) confirm that short hair was the prevailing style for men.

Biblical Instruction for Priests

Jewish religious law also emphasized short, neat hairstyles—especially for priests. The Talmud commanded that priests cut their hair every thirty days. Why? Because they understood and followed Ezekiel 44:20: *“They shall neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long; but they shall keep their hair well trimmed.”*

These priests were meant to set an example for God’s people (Malachi 2:7). According to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 22b), their hairstyle was called the “Julian” or what we might call today a “Caesar cut.”

Was Christ Under a Nazarite Vow?

Some mistakenly believe that Jesus Christ had long hair because they assume He was under a Nazarite vow. However, this belief is not supported by Scripture.

Jesus was not a Nazarite—He was a **Nazarene**. That is, He was from the town of Nazareth (see *Matthew 2:23; Mark 1:9; Luke 1:26; John 1:45*). This fulfilled a prophecy, but it had nothing to do with the vow of the Nazarite described in the Old Testament.

What Was a Nazarite Vow?

The Nazarite vow, outlined in *Numbers 6:2–6*, was a special and temporary commitment of separation to the Lord. It required strict abstinence from certain things:

“When either a man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite... he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink... All the days that he separates himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body.” — Numbers 6:2–3, 6

A Nazarite could not drink wine or grape products, come into contact with the dead or cut their hair during the vow period (long hair was a sign of their temporary humiliation and separation)

Did Jesus Follow These Restrictions?

No. Scripture clearly records that Jesus **drank wine** (*Matthew 11:19*) and **touched the dead**. (*Matthew 9:25*)

These actions would have violated a Nazarite vow, proving conclusively that Jesus was not under it. He lived in complete obedience to God’s law—He would not have broken the vow if He had taken it.

The Purpose of Long Hair in a Nazarite Vow

Long hair, in this context, was a symbol of **humiliation and consecration**. When the vow ended, the person would shave their head, marking the completion of their period of separation (*Numbers 6:18*). This shaving represented a return to normal life—and to proper grooming standards.

What Does the New Testament Say About Men with Long Hair?

Paul addresses the issue directly:

“Does not even nature itself teach you, that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” — 1 Corinthians 11:14

The Bible calls long hair on a man a **shame**, not a symbol of godliness. This aligns with the natural order established by God: Men and women are distinct in their appearance and roles.

Today, long hair on a man is often associated not with humility, but with **pride**, rebellion, or a desire to stand out. This is contrary to the biblical call to **modesty, humility, and distinction** between male and female.

It is then clear that Jesus was not under a Nazarite vow, and the Bible does **not** support the idea that He wore His hair long. Instead, He lived as a Jewish man in obedience to God’s law and customs, which included short hair for men.

Long Hair: A Shame for a Man

The apostle Paul makes a profound statement in **1 Corinthians 11:14**:

*“Does not even nature itself teach you, that if a man has long hair, **it is a shame unto him?**”*

Paul’s instruction reflects God’s natural order and what is appropriate for men and women. Long hair on a man is called a **shame**—a dishonor—while long hair on a woman is her **glory** and natural covering (v. 15).

Men growing long hair today often do so **not out of humility**, but as a form of pride, self-expression, or rebellion. The long-haired Nazarite vow symbolized mourning and separation, not masculinity or holiness in general. Jesus, who came to fulfill the law and live as a model of godliness, would never have worn His hair in a way that conflicted with what Paul taught under divine inspiration.

Christ's Appearance

Jesus was a carpenter by trade (Mark 6:3)—a man who worked outdoors, likely strong, sun-weathered, and masculine in appearance. He looked so ordinary that on multiple occasions He blended into crowds without being recognized (Luke 4:30; John 8:59; 10:39). If He had stood out with long, flowing hair, Judas would not have needed to identify Him with a kiss (Matt. 26:48).

What Does Jesus Look Like Now?

If we are to consider His appearance at all, we should reflect on how He looks today as a glorified being in heaven. The apostle John describes Him in Revelation 1:14:

“His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire.”

This image is symbolic of His divine glory and eternal majesty, *far beyond any earthly image.*

What About Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5?

Some may point to two verses in the book of Leviticus that seem to prohibit the cutting of hair or shaving the beard:

- *“You shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shall you mar the corners of your beard”* (Leviticus 19:27).
- *“They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh”* (Leviticus 21:5).

At first glance, these verses might appear to forbid all haircuts or shaving. However, a closer look at the context, and clearer translations, reveals the true meaning.

The *American Translation by Goodspeed* puts it this way:

“You must not shave around your temple, nor do away with the corners of your beard”
“They must not shave part of their heads bald, nor shave off the corners of their beards, nor make incisions in their bodies.”

These instructions were given specifically to the nation of Israel after they had come out of Egypt—a land steeped in pagan practices. For centuries, the Israelites had been immersed in Egyptian culture and idolatry, and they needed re-education in God’s ways.

God’s instruction was not a universal ban on haircuts or shaving, but rather a **prohibition against specific pagan rituals**. These included shaving the head into circular patterns or trimming the beard into certain shapes in honor of false gods—especially the sun god. The **round haircuts** (often leaving a circle on the crown) and square beards were part of ceremonial worship, not personal grooming.

The *halo* image commonly seen in religious artwork today actually has its roots in this pagan sun-god symbolism.

Jeremiah 10:2 offers this warning: *“Thus says the Lord, **Learn not the way of the heathen.**”*

God did not want His people mimicking the religious customs or appearances of idol-worshipping nations. These Levitical laws were intended to separate Israel from the corrupt and idolatrous cultures around them. Shaving in those specific ceremonial ways was forbidden—not because grooming was wrong, but because the intent behind it was pagan worship.

Modern Applications

Many modern hairstyles still draw inspiration from rebellious or pagan sources—skinhead culture (shaved heads), Rastafarian dreadlocks, rock band icons, or styles meant to shock or provoke. These are not fitting for members of God's Church.

We are called to **“come out from among them and be separate”** (2 Corinthians 6:17). We are to follow the example of Christ (1 Peter 2:21), who represented dignity, humility, and obedience—not cultural defiance.

Grooming That Honors God

There is nothing wrong with trimming hair or shaving the beard for the purpose of a neat, respectful appearance. In fact, such grooming is consistent with biblical instruction for order and cleanliness. **What God condemns is grooming for vain, worldly, or idolatrous purposes.**

For men, hair should be worn **short enough not to cover the ears or reach the shirt collar**. It should be clean and well-kept. Sideburns should also be maintained, as shaving them off entirely may produce a feminine appearance, blurring the gender distinction God intends (Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11:14-15).

A Woman's Hair Is Her Covering

The Bible clearly teaches that *“if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering”* (1 Corinthians 11:15). From this verse, two important truths emerge.

1. Her Hair Is Her Glory

Something that is called a "glory" in Scripture deserves careful attention. A woman's hair should be well-groomed, clean, and worn in a tasteful, feminine manner. When neglected, hair can easily become unkempt and unattractive. But on the other extreme, vanity can lead some women to adopt styles that are extravagant, showy, or designed to draw attention—which is also displeasing to God.

The apostle Paul addressed this in 1 Timothy 2:9-10:

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

Similarly, 1 Peter 3:3-5 emphasizes inward character over outward display:

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

In the apostolic era, it was common for women to wear elaborate braided hairstyles woven with gold, pearls, and even wreaths—drawing attention to status and beauty rather than character. Christian

women must avoid such vanity. Real beauty in God’s eyes is modest, pure, and rooted in a quiet, humble spirit.

2. Her Hair Is Her Covering

1 Corinthians 11 not only teaches that a woman’s hair is her glory but also that it serves as her **natural covering**. In verses 5-6, Paul makes a strong statement:

“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.”

Here, Paul distinguishes four states of a woman’s hair:

- **Covered** – long hair
- **Uncovered** – short hair
- **Shorn** – very short hair
- **Shaven** – bald

Paul teaches that if a woman’s hair is not long enough to cover her head, it is the same as being shorn or even shaved—both of which are considered shameful. Therefore, to be properly “covered,” a woman’s hair must be **long enough to serve that function**.

This covering is not just cultural or symbolic. It is rooted in **creation order**:

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man... Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power [symbol of authority] on her head because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:7-10).

A woman’s long hair symbolizes her **submission to God’s order and authority**—especially within marriage and the Church. The phrase *“because of the angels”* reminds us that heavenly beings observe godly order and modesty. A woman who discards this symbol of submission may also remove herself from the angelic protection that accompanies obedience.

How Long Is “Long”?

The Bible does not give an exact measurement, but the word “covering” provides a clue. For hair to be a **covering**, it must be **long enough to cover the head naturally**, particularly the ears and neck, which are the first areas concealed as hair grows out.

This does **not** mean a woman’s hair must always hang loose or never be styled up. What matters is that the overall length is unmistakably long, feminine, and sufficient to serve as a natural covering.

Most hairstyles are acceptable provided they:

- Reflect modesty and femininity

- Are clean and well-kept
- Are **long** enough to be considered a covering

In summary, a woman's hair is not just about fashion. It is a spiritual matter of glory, modesty, and submission. In honoring God's design for womanhood, long hair serves both as a visible expression of obedience and a mark of her role in God's created order.

Conclusion

It Does Matter!

How we present ourselves before our Creator **does** matter! Our appearance—including how we wear our hair—is not a trivial detail in God's eyes. If we truly belong to Christ, then we are called to be **lights** in a world that is spiritually dark and confused. Jesus said, *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden"* (Matthew 5:14). The way we present ourselves reflects the kind of light we are shining.

In a society where gender roles are blurred and rebellion against God's design is rampant, it is crucial that the people of God maintain clear distinctions. **Men in God's Church should look like men, and women should look like women**—just as God intended from the beginning. We are called to be **set apart**, not to imitate the world or conform to its ever-changing trends.

Scripture commands: *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 6:17). This includes *how we dress, how we behave, and yes—even how we wear our hair.*

God does not call us to draw attention through odd, extreme, or rebellious appearances. As Christians, our attitude should be marked by **modesty, humility, submission, and a desire to honor God** in everything we do. That includes showing respect for His design for male and female.

Our outward appearance, especially our hair, is a reflection of our inward attitude. It signals whether we are in agreement with God's order or resisting it. The way we wear our hair is not merely a matter of personal style or cultural preference, it is a matter of **obedience** and **witness**.

"Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, not man from woman" (1 Cor. 1:11). There's mutual value and dignity in God's design, head coverings weren't about superiority, but order and reverence.

So yes, **it does matter**. In a world turned upside down, we must reflect God's truth—not confusion. Let our appearance, like our lives, shine as a clear testimony that we belong to Him.

I encourage you to watch this interesting video in the link below.

<https://youtu.be/CXlj4gU-0PY?si=7RtSgvT36u4WhnqC>