

SHEAR OBEDIENCE

Dixie was the finest employee we ever hired, with one small peculiarity. She had this strange fascination with her hair. Every day, she would show up to work and her hair would be different. One day it would be in a pony tail. The next day, it would be straight with tinted highlights. Still another day might find it in tight curls with little bows threaded through it. One day, we had ignored it long enough. She showed up to work with her hair done up in dozens of dreadnought braids with bows and bells on the ends. In response to the question of what she was doing, her reply piqued our interest. She felt that if God gave you a resource that continually replenished itself no matter what you did to it, He must have wanted you to play with it. No Biblical basis for that, but certainly a unique point of view. Meanwhile, we were trying to establish a professional office and had agreed to assist her in obtaining experience in that type of environment. We could not allow her to deal with clients expecting to work with a professional when most of the time, she looked anything but that. Even though her work was excellent. Though we are positive she did not agree with us, nonetheless, she acknowledged our authority and wore her hair in a more conservative manner for the rest of her internship. She chose obedience out of respect.

Strange how often hair and the control of it become proving grounds of authority. Perhaps this is because our hairstyle is so integral to our self image that giving up control of it is very difficult. We will usually relinquish it only through fear, coercion, respect, or love. One sign of the Nazarite vow, a vow of total separation to the service of God, was never cutting their hair. When that time of separation was to end, they went to the temple, took their untouched hair that was a sign of the power of God resting upon them, shaved it off, and burnt it before the Lord as a sacrifice. It used to be that when a man entered prison, the first thing he received was a haircut. The armed forces take it one step further. You are considered as being under total subjection to your superiors and this is demonstrated by the initial removal of most of your hair. The determination of appearance is the right of the one with authority.

Conversely, rebellion against authority usually manifests itself first in matters of personal appearance. The identifying and unifying mark of the rebellious youth of the 1960's was long hair among the men. The hippies were celebrated in the musical "Hair", written about their separation from the norms and expectations of society. When teenage boys begin to feel that they no longer needs to take direction from their fathers, most will attempt to grow facial hair as a sign of their "maturity". Even the punk movement, today's version of the hippies, is symbolized by bizarre hairstyles that scream to the world, "My parents no longer control me". Unfortunately, rebellion against the authority structure laid out by God for His church also tends to manifest itself through changes in hair styles.

The church, trying to speak for God, has historically taken the same position about hair styles that God did in His written Word. This is the admonition that men should keep their hair cut short and that women should keep their hair long. The scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:14,15 is pretty plain. "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." The only question about God's desires concerning hair, which is not answered by these scriptures, is the question of what constitutes "long" hair.

We have heard for many years that the men in the time of Jesus wore long hair. We have even heard speculation that He was a Nazarite. We can not find anywhere in the scriptures where it indicates any connection between Jesus and the vows of a Nazarite. Nor do we understand where people get the idea, other than from a few fanciful depictions of Christ by artists, that long hair was a custom in any Roman province. The busts and statues of men from that era were sculpted with

short hair. Just as, until recently, the women appeared to glory in their long hair making them feminine and distinct from the men. In David's time, Absalom's long hair was unusual enough that it warranted mentioning as setting him apart from others. For this ultimately rebellious son, it was also his death. The only mention we could find anywhere concerning the cutting of hair by women of those times involved temple prostitutes. These women, followers of Artemus, apparently gave their bodies to temple worshipers to raise funds for the priesthood. Their short hair served to identify their consecration to this service.

Long or short hair still serves today to help identify those who are consecrated to the service of God. For the woman, long hair is a sign of her submission to and protection by the authority structure of the church and family established by God. It is a form of glory that once lost, can never be exactly recovered. It identifies her as a woman, regardless of the fashions of her time. For the man, short hair is also a sign of submission to the authority of God and the church. In a time when femininity is encouraged among men, and rebellion is praised, how refreshing it is to find men willing to look like what God intended them to be.

Even more importantly, in the relationship between God and His bride, submission to His will in this matter is an act of love. My wife cuts my hair. In whatever fashion she chooses. In our marriage, in our union into one flesh, in accordance with 1 Cor 7:4, she has power over my body. It is for her pleasure only. As she is the one who will be looking at it and be seen with me, I allow her to determine my hairstyle. On the flip side, I also determine how she will wear her long hair. She does not like to have it down because it is more difficult to manage. I like it that way. I think it makes her look like a lady. I think it is glorious. So when I ask, she wears it down to please me. Your first reaction might be that it would be the day when your husband or wife will tell you how to wear your hair. You are right! That will be the day when you discover that the needs and happiness of someone else matters to you more than your own. Which is about as classic a definition of love as exists. And there should be no greater love than that which exists between you and your coming bridegroom.

A final image, if you will. Picture a woman, Mary the sister of Lazarus. She is in Simon's house, in the midst of feasting, and her heart is breaking. Not because the people there consider her beneath them. Not because her past is being dredged up as a reason that this holy man called Jesus should disdain her. No, her heart is torn because, through some divine revelation, she knows that this man she loves is about to die. With no thought of those around her, she chooses to worship. She pours out her love as her tears fall onto His feet. She pours out her wealth as a year's worth of wages in precious ointment anoints His feet. Finally, she chooses to take her crowning beauty and lay it at His feet. In an act of devotion both incomprehensible, and impossible for many women of our times, she dries His feet with her long, glorious hair. Her glory, in submission to His.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel an employer has the right to control your appearance?
2. Have you ever tried to establish independence by choosing a hair style, color, facial hair, etc., that you knew would be disapproved of?
3. If it truly matters to you how you wear your hair, what reasons can you imagine that you might wear it differently for someone else? Love? Fear? Respect? To whom would you be willing to give up control over your appearance?
4. Do you feel it is right for someone else to try to control someone else's appearance?
5. Have you ever known anyone who began to rebel against authority through changes with their hair?

6. What do you think is the "shame" of a man having long hair and what do you think is the "glory" of a woman having it?
7. Have you ever heard of any historical evidence of Jesus having long hair?
8. Why do you think hair has become such a source of contention in the establishment of chains of authority?
9. Does hair style serve to identify different groups of people and what they stand for? For example, can you readily identify Amish folk, punk rockers, yuppies, apostolic believers, etc.? How?
10. There are only so many firsts in life. Have you ever heard of anyone having their long hair cut for the first time and then crying about it later? What was lost?
11. What is the protection inherent in having someone in authority over you?
12. Do you feel long hair is a feminine trait and makes the wearer look more like a woman, regardless of their gender?
13. Why does the army, in an effort to make men out of boys, start with removing their hair?
14. Do you feel that scripture gives the husband control of the wife's body and vice versa? If not, what do you feel is meant by 1 Cor 7:4?
15. Have you ever loved someone enough that their needs and their happiness was more important to you than your own? Would you like to? Do you feel that men having short hair and women long hair is an act of submission to God?