Why I’m the Lady in the Hat



It’s pretty easy to find me at our church; I’m the one always in a hat. Someone always makes an affirming comment like “Love the hat!”—and probably the biggest reason is that I’m the only one wearing one. Even in a church of 5,000 people. Most people assume it’s a fashion statement, but I wear a hat after wrestling with God over the issue of headcoverings for six years.

For years, I dismissed 1 Corinthians 11 as culturally bound and obsolete: women don’t cover their heads in worship anymore because. . . well, because we just don’t. Slam dunk.

Then I discovered that it had been a worldwide practice in the church for almost 2,000 years until just a few decades ago. As the result of an inaccurate reporting of the proceedings of Vatican II (as I understand it), it was like a rumor swept through Christianity: “no more covering.” And since the fashion of wearing hats in public had changed, it was nothing more than a pointless relic to most churchgoers, gladly dropped.

Then I came across an argument for 1 Corinthians 11 that I couldn’t counter. In this passage, there are three glories: man, who is God’s glory; woman, who is man’s glory, and the woman’s long hair, which is her glory. When a woman covers, she is covering two glories—her own, and the man’s. This leaves only God’s glory—the man—uncovered during worship.

That was pretty powerful, but it wasn’t enough to get me to cover my head. It was, however, enough to get me to feel increasingly uncomfortable worshiping. With the sense of missing something. For six years.

Finally, there was one verse in that chapter that clinched it

for me: *10 For this reason a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels*. Ohhh. . . the angels. The beings present when we worship, who "long to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12) like forgiveness and reconciliation and grace and redemption.



My son walking me up the aisle at his wedding

So I looked for someone to tell me what that symbol of authority should be, if not a physical symbol. A wedding ring? Doesn't work for unmarried women. Hair? That's already standard issue for women, even unsubmissive rebellious ones. I asked my husband what he thought, and he gently replied, "I can't see any other conclusion from the text. I've always thought wearing a covering is what is commanded."

So I gave in, and started wearing a hat because of the angels. I don't understand what difference it makes to them, but they know why I'm the lady in the hat.

I was not prepared for the personal blessing that came as a result: I love feeling so feminine! I've also been blessed by the way men seem to have a visceral, positive reaction to the sight of a woman in a hat.

It's all good.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/why_i_am_"the_lady_in_the_hat" on Oct. 13, 2009

“What Do You Think About Headcoverings for Christian Women?”

Sue,

I am intrigued by this article “Should a Christian Woman Wear a Headcovering?” by Daniel Botkin (enclosed by mail and also available online here) about headcoverings, and it makes sense to me, but I would really like your input as a woman.

I read the headcoverings article with a huge smile across my heart. Its an excellent article! . . . And I couldn’t agree more.

Before I go further, though, let me first state that Probe does not have an official position on this issue; my answer is about me and my response to this issue. For six years or so I struggled with the plain command of scripture [*1 Cor 11:10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.*] and finally gave in. I just could not get around the phrase “because of the angels,” which has absolutely nothing to do with cultural- and time-bound practices. So, about a year ago, I started wearing hats to church. Recently, I purchased a couple of scarves which I also use as a headcovering in worship and for public prayer.

It’s been interesting the strong response I’ve received from men, who absolutely love to see a woman in a hat, even though they usually don’t know it’s not a fashion statement for me. They just know something strikes them as very, very right about it. What startled me was the effect on ME: I have so enjoyed feeling so feminine! I have also enjoyed experiencing the peace that is the fruit of obedience.

I started out wearing lace doilies or some other kind of

headgear when I was in Catholic grade school. In the 60s and 70s, there was a wholesale dropping of the headcovering in almost all Western churches (with the rise of feminist thought, and I think they are related). I never even thought about how quickly 1900 years of church history were overturned in a mere decade until I couldn't come up with a single good reason to disobey scripture.

So there you have it! Thanks for sharing the great article with me!

Sue Bohlin

Hi Sue!!

Your response was such a blessing and encouragement to my wife and me! Thank you so much for taking the time to read it and respond. Because of your response actually, my wife went out and bought a couple of scarves today! Well thank you for your faithfulness and may the Lord continue to guide you in His word and in His love.

See Also:

- "Do the Bible's Statements on Head Coverings Apply Today?"
- Sue Bohlin's Blog Post: "Why I'm the Lady in the Hat"