

Why I Decided to Cut my Hair

By Sharon Hargreaves

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Recently I was asked why I cut my hair, so I have tried to recall some experiences and conversations regarding the hair issues over the years.

At the end of this letter I will give reference to the transcription of an in-depth study on 1 Corinthians 11 done by MM Outreach Ministries of Nelson, British Columbia, Canada. It articulates some Jewish views from the Talmud which were the additional written laws and oral laws over and above the God-given Ten Commandments. Understanding some of these Talmudic additions is necessary in order to understand how they affected the Jewish Christians of that day. These added laws were, in fact, in opposition to God's Word. These are the issues Paul was writing to the Corinthians about.

The topic of 1 Corinthians 11 is about head coverings for Jewish men and women while praying or prophesying. It has nothing to do with a daily rule about Christian hairstyles for men, married women, toddler, child, teen or single woman. The workers not only subverted the topic from veil to hair, but they added a new requirement that women's hair be kept in a bun. The workers made women's hair style into a doctrine of proof of salvation.

WHY DID I DECIDE TO HAVE MY HAIR CUT?

When I was 16 years old, and baptism was spoken about at convention, those considering the 'step' were advised to speak with "the worker you knew best" - for approval. I spoke with Elsie Scheller who had been in our area. She gave me no scriptural explanation for baptism. The discussion was mostly about how nice it was that I was "willing for this step"; but, she added, "You are still curling your hair!" This was immediately confusing to me because Elsie had the most beautiful naturally curly hair! Hair was not, in my view, much of a challenge for her. Why would someone with lovely curly hair make 'curling my hair' a standard issue for acceptance for baptism? I felt indignant and confused. The rest of the "visit" was about how we would just wear our ordinary clothes with a long raincoat to put over top and to wear old tennis shoes. And then they safety pinned the garb between your knees so it would not float over your head while being underwater!!!!!! I had watched many baptisms so knew exactly the procedure, in and out of the water. And, at Prince George it was cold water!

I hadn't done very well with the hair issue so far anyway, as when I was 15, in great exasperation one day; I took the scissors and cut my own hair. I self-styled a 'duck tail' - now that 'dates' me - some may recall that style from the 50's - 1955 to be exact. My mother cried when she saw what I had done but she said little. (A 'duck tail' style was short and each side at the back combed toward the middle.) I think my Mother was more shocked than anything else. She did not, however, give me a lecture - I just felt I had greatly disappointed her and that made me feel pretty badly because I loved my Mother dearly.

After being baptised and now given permission to take the emblems, the "standard" about the hair issue was brought into focus. By this time I mostly kept my hair in a 'pony tail' in school. This better suited my participation in sports.

The autumn after my baptism Elsie Scheller and Clara Manary had meetings in our town. Now, they made the hair issue become front page, bold print headlines, in my 'spiritual responsibilities.' So the challenge went from wearing a pony tail to 'doing it up' - somehow. The thing we all called a 'bun'. It was never my idea of beauty. And not curling it made that challenge far beyond good success, as I have very fine, straight hair. My attempts were less than cheerful and turned the wondering heads of my fellow students, as I proceeded to 'do my hair up' for school. Sports, rather than academics, were my space and so the hair-do was severely tested. The long hair and buns eventually destroys every normal activity that a girl and woman has to do or wants to do. Washing and drying long hair is, for some, an all day affair. Eventually, the inactivity that women are forced into affects their health, energy level, emotional happiness and weight. Horseback riding, skiing, swimming, tennis, ball playing, running, although still allowed, become such a nuisance due to the hair requirement and skirts that they are usually eliminated altogether. A woman's personality is changed by these man-made, unwritten rules.

The hair-do was just part of the larger package of the 'cookie cutter standards' that came to define one's identity. The standards for acceptance also included sleeve lengths, skirt lengths, no pants for women and girls, stockings, shoes, colors, rules against TV's, movies, music, parties, games, dancing, radios, reading materials, ones' friends, where I went and shouldn't go, what I did, and shouldn't do, these things virtually intruded into and complicated every outward part of life. For these things I became 'willing', believing these were God's ideas. However, they contradicted the fact that Jesus said His yoke was easy and His burden was light.

The mind is a powerful thing, and false teaching can give us a 'pride' in senseless burdens that we can falsely call the 'Will of God.'" Satan is a master of counterfeits. It irked me that the 'fellas' had it easier in every way. But we were told at conventions that the women would get more blessing and have more opportunity to be a light to others. That reasoning always did strike me as an odd and unfair avenue to blessing. It did not occur to me that Jesus said "I am the Light of the world" and that it was the moral character of God lived out in Him that was the true Light. I believe our 'odd standards' for women succeeded only in repelling, rather than attracting anyone to Christ. I recall a man in Saskatchewan who brought a friend to a gospel meeting and then warned him ahead of time, "Just follow me and don't look at the women's hair-dos --- it will put you off right away!"

Christ's true light involves, rather, the inward motives : moral values, integrity, honesty, love, joy,

peace, patience, a pure mind, gentleness, loving-kindness, caring, sharing, truthful, moral purity, self control, control of the tongue, faithfulness in marriage, caring for your brothers and sisters, caring for the needy, honest in business, honoring your parents etc. When the Holy Spirit is our Councilor He will lead us into all Truth, and of these virtues there is no end. It is better expressed in Romans 12:2, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"...not your hairdo. Throughout the chapter Paul elaborates on different gifts and ministries which show practical ways of living as 'light' in this world. None of which involve outward appearance or rejection of normal social activities.

The struggles with the hair-do were never easy in the work either. While staying in someone else's home, it was not comfortable to get caught early in the morning with 'your hair down' - so doing it up was necessary even before you went to the bathroom. Just as rare was feeling comfortable at the breakfast table until you had your hair done up and dressed. It was great to stay with some single girls and just be natural for a change.

Winter cold weather days presented yet another challenge---when it is minus 20 degrees Celsius and colder, your ears are in danger of frost bite. A toque usually keeps you warm and comfortable—however a toque doesn't do your bun hair a favor. You couldn't just simply take your toque off and easily run a comb through your hair and be ready for the day.

Life in the Philippines was even more challenging. Many modes of travel leave you totally at the mercy of the wind (which doesn't consider your hair at all). Though I am short - many times I would catch my bun in something and yank out a hunk of what I thought was a well pinned coiffure. If I had a nickel for every time I re-did' my hair-do in the Philippines it would be significant.

Traveling on a smaller bus with all the windows down (because of the heat) was the worst. The only way was to wear a scarf - so you were between the devil and the deep blue sea; wind-whack your bun or swelter in the heat under a head wrap!

I, along with many other women, needed a hairnet and hair spray plus those pins {that always scratched one's head} to secure the whole business. My mother and a few others supplied me with light brown hairnets my whole 14 years in the Islands. They didn't make brown ones over there. It must have cost them all a fortune. In later years hair nets became very hard to find. Hair pins were another challenge. We had friends here and there who could supply us - the Japanese variety was the best.

Convention preps in the Philippines were another challenge for me - if James Walden was around, breakfast was six a.m. More of a challenge for the sisters and particularly the breakfast cook - since it is still dark before 5 a.m. there, you have to get your hair-do done off in some small corner, and yes, I have managed it with a flashlight - hoping not to disturb the others too much. The hair-do always added 10 to 15 minutes to getting dressed and ready - in order to get the breakfast on the table for six sharp. This rarely put me in a good mood for the Bible read after breakfast. I was simply too tired to say the least. I am not a morning person.

I have rid my house of all hair pins and old hairnets; cursed things!

When I first left the work at 50 years of age, finding work was a major challenge. Two of my first jobs were working in a fish cleaning facility and later shucking oysters. Each required a head wrap for cleanliness. Inevitably I had to re-do my 'hair-do' - sometimes at lunch time and usually before I left in the afternoon and then again in the evening if I went somewhere. What a hassle.

I realize that there are friends and workers who may not fully enter into my experiences but that does not invalidate mine. Many parents have had another 'layer of hair' so to speak, to deal with, if they had girls. Not only the mothers' personal struggle with their own hair but to spend hours in the mornings getting their girls ready for school - braiding their hair etc. Mothers have their own stories to tell and I have heard and seen plenty to know their stories and tears are true.

From the many comments I have heard over the years, I don't believe many husbands appreciate the problem of the long hair issue. At the best of times, husbands are often impatient, feeling their wives spend too much time getting ready to go somewhere. The hairdos certainly add to the time and frustration factor!

One family I knew had a number of children. The Dad often sat in the car and honked for things to speed up. One Sunday morning one child fell in the mud while going to the car. And while changing that child's clothes, the mother's skirt was soiled. Before she rectified the first emergency, another child required some attention. The car honking must have rattled her more than usual for when they arrived at meeting and she took her coat off----we all discovered that she had forgotten to put on a clean skirt. This was highly amusing to us all, but I often think of how the pressure of getting children ready for meetings must have nearly driven some dear mothers to despair.

All these things caused me to hate my appearance. It does not give a sense of femininity, ladylikeness, a sense of well being or a sense of respectability. On the contrary, one battles embarrassment because of the messiness of long hair. The wasted time on the dowdy appearance was so unfulfilling and non-gratifying. Criticism came from insiders as well as outsiders. Professing people are often embarrassed by one another's appearance, as well as their own.

After I had returned to my home area and was employed by the School District as a school bus driver, my hair was the subject of amusing comments from time to time. One of the employees at Maintenance frequently drew cartoons of any particular "mistake" someone made. It was kind of a harmless way to keep us all on our 'cautious toes.' One cartoon he drew was of a group of we ladies in some heated discussion over something - each person was easy to detect by some distinct features - mine were a pointed chin, pointy nose and the bun perched on the back of my head—a good cartoonist aptly makes a point by exaggerating the odd things about a person. I actually had a bit of a shock to see my bun with such "high profile"!

Perhaps the first faint unraveling of the bun came when I spoke to a fellow school bus driver. His background had been Mennonite and he had his own School and Church so I asked him about those who had once been "White cap" or "Black cap" Mennonites and how they arrived at a new understanding of the hair and head covering issues. The part of his reply that stuck with

me was, "We don't make a doctrine out of anything that cannot be confirmed in at least three or four other places in Scripture. Keep Scripture in context and to whom it is written".

The same careful approach to doctrines is seen in Paul's writings about problems and accusations in the church.

2 Corinthians 13:1: "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouths of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." KJ

1 Timothy 5:19: "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder, unless it is brought by two or three witnesses." NIV

Similarly, Proverbs 11:14 says, "but in the multitude of councilors there is safety."

Proverbs 24:6: "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in the multitude of councilors there is safety."

All vital doctrines of Scripture are repeated often.

A professing man I knew very well told his sister the proof that women must have long hair was the example of Mary wiping Jesus feet with her hair - if it hadn't been long - she couldn't have done that! She said, "Surely you don't think that scripture is about long hair do you? It's not about long hair at all."

Often an idea is introduced as a rule by someone who then looks to find a Scripture that seems to support it. This is common with legalisms imposed for control purposes. Judgments and comparisons take over. These man-made standards turn the spotlight to the outward appearance and away from the true character of the heart. I believe the hair issue is far deeper than simply terms of "standard" but is instead a "control issue". If girls, women and sister workers are ever allowed to wear normal hairdos of their own choosing, instead of the required bun, then I will say it is not a repressive control issue.

The basic reasons I wanted to have my hair cut and styled was because I wanted to feel good about myself, to look like a lady, feel feminine and attractive; and be released of the constant nuisance of fixing my hair. At the time I did not understand the fear I experienced in making this decision but I believe I now understand the two main reasons for this fear.

Number One you will find when you read The Essay on 1 Corinthians 11: which outlines the real issue Paul was addressing. Understanding the history and attitudes of that day will give us accurate interpretation.

Number Two of the puzzle is how false notions of "worldliness" came into the workers' teachings. This is all tied together with the beginning when William Irvine began to reject orthodox Biblical beliefs, openly condemning Christian churches, and expressing his view of "worldliness". William Irvine condemned religion, politics and education, tobacco, alcohol, wealthy people, lace, fancy clothing, money, Christian doctrines, Christian education and

charitable activities. Other workers added sports, entertainments, dancing, cosmetics, and hobbies to the list of don'ts. The early workers mocked those who trusted in the Blood of Christ to save, and called them "Calvary ranters". When the Cross of Calvary is not the center of Christianity it opens the way for all manner of legalisms, disguised as "standards" for acceptance with God. The early workers added their own unwritten rules to God's written Word in order to be saved.

A quote from *The Church Without a Name* by Kathleen Lewis, page 165, "The workers perceive worldliness as a fashion or activity. But the true meaning is "secular," or "temporal," referring to a philosophy of life that views man and the world as being the apex of the universe, while denying the existence of God. Worldliness is an "outlook," not a "look." It is atheism, secular humanism, self-centeredness and sensuality."

The workers' appearance code has evolved greatly from the early days of brown underwear for men, facial hair, black stockings, bulky old fashioned shoes, meeting hats for sister workers, banning wedding rings and jewelry, brides not wearing white, very severe hair-dos and dark clothing etc. Hair issues among others, have 'loosened up' a bit, but still the fear is very intact about having one's hair cut or even in having it loose or in a pony tail. And, even though some women are pushing the boundaries of the workers' rules, some workers still look down on these girls or women as being "vain," "worldly," "unacceptable," "unsubmissive," "unsaved," "without good understanding" "rebellious," or "losing out."

This fear is empowered through usurped man-made control, regarding these superficial things renamed "Truth" or "standards." You learn to live to please others. If you are told a 'standard' is something God requires, of course you are made to feel fearful if you resist it or reject it. One is made to feel you are resisting or rejecting God himself if you question the workers' "Truth". This produces a very real paralysis in our spiritual lives. The 'lens' of any non scriptural tradition clouds our vision of Christ.

The unwritten rules against "worldliness" severely affected the normal development and appreciation for our God given talents and skills. These restrictions were in opposition to God's gifting and His commands to use those talents for His glory. We should be free to live in harmony with God's gifts whether they are for work or play. Art, music and athletics were among some of the "bad things" in our human nature that we were frequently told should be kept in subjection. I remember Isabel Boyd saying that her parents wouldn't let her go too far with her music for they feared her musical talent would lead her astray. Many years later, Stephen Pierson who played in the Philharmonic orchestra professed and became a worker. And he went straight to the top of the workers' pedestal as his musical talents were lauded by all. Go figure! Unwritten rules have a way of changing and then people want to pretend that they never existed.

Understanding scripture has everything to do with breaking the bondage of yokes and burdens that were never God's will in the first place.

No matter the activity or work, the hairdo was nothing less than a nuisance. From sleeping, bathing, attending meetings, working to swimming, it had to be considered. The long process

before having my hair cut involved much more than the hair issue, of course. But, for me, having my hair cut was part of taking back the life that was stolen from me through false authority. The process was like the developing process on the first old Polaroid cameras – slowly but surely the picture began to appear, first foggy, then piece by piece, presto – there it was!!! Clear! And very revealing!

Early 2001, a dear friend shared his research of the William Irvine history. I then spent literally hundreds of hours searching every aspect of that. I was not going to leave one leaf unturned. Learning that hundreds of others shared almost identical experiences to my own was very validating.

Even very recently, when confronted with what is on the internet, an elder's wife, whom I know very well, claimed that, "The stuff on the Internet is put there by exes and bitter people." I once held that view myself because that is what we had been told by those above us. And I reasoned with the old adage "Well, the people aren't perfect but the Way is perfect." Well, one thing I know, Jesus is perfect! And He is The Way! Nothing added and nothing taken away.

After hearing about the excommunications of Alberta, I was determined to meet those excommunicated people face to face. The last convention I attended after that May 2001, visit to Alberta, worker advice to me was "I am really worried about you. I am afraid you will lose out!" And, "Don't get involved."---- The answer I gave them was, "I am worried about you! You are too close to (a worker's name) to see what is going on! And to another worker who challenged me with the same statement, I said, "We ARE involved, and so are YOU! These are our brethren and we ARE involved."

Those details are a book on their own but the bottom line was – to question the workers labels you WRONG. --- And to quote one worker --- "status quo prevails over everything else". The workers choice to protect 'status quo' rather than their own friends or to admit wrong was at first a very unearthing experience for me. Those I once trusted and thought were honest clearly have taken a course I know is not of God.

Shortly after that convention in 2001, I stopped attending meetings – in a state of spiritual starvation.

But God didn't leave me there long. The most important piece of the developing picture came when God opened the way to my first wonderful spiritual teaching when I found the Living Truth Ministry from Toronto, with Pastor Charles Price. I learned more in the first 45 minute message than I had ever dreamed of my whole life. To hear a real biblical message and receive real understanding of scripture was the greatest miracle of all.

Christ, and Christ alone was truly uplifted, honoured and glorified. The worship was God centered, not preacher-centered. For the first time in my life, I felt the sin question being dealt with in my life. I found a new appetite for the Word I had never experienced my whole life and began to experience the empowering of the indwelling Christ, setting me free to worship in a very new and meaningful way. Check it out for yourself: www.livingtruth.ca

Although I live in Fort Fraser, BC, and attend an Evangelical Free Church and rejoice in the fellowship here, I am so blessed to be able to enter into Charles Price's ministry in Toronto, over the airwaves of radio and television. I have found many programs with awesome teachers, Charles Price, Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, John Hagee and indirectly Mark Hitchcock of Edmond, Oklahoma. I was blown away by the comprehension of Scripture they could share. They are everything I had been led to believe they weren't!!! Many other ex-professing people who are now real Christians also enjoy hearing Charles Price teach. I love worshipping with other believers and rejoice in their fellowship where God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have first place, are honoured, and glorified. I can sing and pray with people who share in God's free gift of Salvation, without false trappings and bondage. I love being with Christians who love to talk about scripture and the Lord all the time. We never run out of topics to talk about.

Some have asked me if I think they should cut their hair. The truth is, with God, it is not about long or short hair on men, women, boys or girls. Any area of our behavior other than Christian morality and Christian service that is governed by man's "standards" in order to be accepted into their "spiritual" group is a stronghold of Satan.

In order for God to have full control all false bondage must be broken. For me the false control over my appearance was a stronghold of Satan. Of course there were many other areas but I am trying to keep to the topic of hair.

I do not think women ' have to' cut their hair or men ' have to grow beards' - I believe it may be necessary to actively make changes where we still feel captive to any old false authority. Some women have pony tails, some like it long and free, some like it short. Some want to wear their hair to please their spouses

The God of Creation showed us much of His character in the infinite beauty, variety, harmony, color, songs and dances in His universe; vast, beyond all measure. Try to find two leaves exactly the same! Try to find two snowflakes exactly the same.

God is not honored by cookie cutter performance rituals. Each person is wonderfully unique. We are not puppets or robots - we are not to be as dead things that move only by another's manipulative control.

Every eye pattern and finger print is so unique that none of us has a double. Every face and hair quality is unique - our God, the Creator is one of great variety. He has made us all so different that no one should ever be bored with humdrums. We will never tie God down to our little plots and schemes.

Of course, we must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

Galatians 5:1

NASB: "It was for freedom, that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

GWT: "Christ has freed us so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. Therefore be firm in this freedom, and don't become slaves again."

KJV: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Acts 15:10, "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

These verses, of course, are all in reference to the God given law of the Ten Commandments - which were all fulfilled in Christ alone. Therefore, to the believer in Christ, His righteousness will be imputed. If this is how God felt about the old Law He had given, how much more he opposes the ungodly burdens we would add to them. God does not impose rituals that sap our time and energy but He has set us free In Christ for effective use of all that we have and are, to His honour and glory.

"It was for freedom that Christ has set us free "; not for bondage.

With Best Wishes in Christ,

Sharon Hargreaves

Please find the transcription of a message given by Cheryl Schatz of MM Outreach Ministries on 1 Corinthians 11 Schatz at: www.2x2church.com
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