

Truth and Spirit Ministries

THE COVERING DOCTRINE

Fact or Fiction? - The teaching that believers need a “covering” such as a pastor or that husbands are a “covering” for their wives is not really scriptural, it is just a teaching created by man.

Fact: The very popular “covering” teaching is not based upon scripture, but is actually a misrepresentation of the scriptures in *1 Corinthians 11* where it speaks of women and head coverings. The teaching is as follows: Christ is the Church’s covering, the Church (which usually means the pastor) is the man’s covering and man is the woman’s covering. Along with this teaching is generally an idea of a trickle down anointing. The premise is that you need a “covering” or protection from false teaching. You also need someone to “cover” your ministry activities (i.e. preaching, teaching, moving in the gifts of the Spirit, etc.) If you get outside of your “covering” you are outside of the will of God. There are flaws to this theory though. Proponents of this teaching give you the idea that what you have comes from them. But doesn’t this put them as a mediator (or go between) between you and God? And how does this conflict with the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? Some teachings can be dangerous as this puts a reliance upon man that God never intended.

There is only One Mediator between God and man and that is Jesus Christ. (*1 Timothy 2:5*) No human made of flesh and blood has the power to be what only God can be in your life. We must all be careful about what teachings we receive. We need to make sure it is biblically correct. Man must not take the role that God the Father, Son or Holy Spirit takes in the lives of His people. Although God may work through others, man must not try to take the place of God in others lives.

Christians should be given the liberty to follow the Spirit as He directs. There are times when what one believes the Holy Spirit is telling him or her may conflict with what their “covering” says. Leaders need to learn to listen to other parts of the body as well. We should be very careful that we do not bring ourselves into bondage to man. The fact is the New Testament does not teach such a thing as man (or woman) being anyone’s spiritual covering. Don’t misunderstand me, I am not advocating that we do not have to listen to or bring ourselves under authority. The bible does teach that people have authority that is given to them by God. The Church should not confuse “a covering” with true authority.

We are to submit to one another in love and humility. We are to be held accountable to God and one another. We are to respect the authority of others that God places in our lives, but at the same time we cannot go against our consciences or what we know to be true. We cannot usurp the will of others because this would fall more under the area of controlling others. When we are clearly in the wrong, however, we should be able to receive correction in humility. We are to come under Church discipline when it is exercised in a godly fashion. God does not want us to be in rebellion to Him or proper authority.

True submission is a voluntary yielding with a right heart before God and man; it is not forced obedience. God has given all people a free will to make choices. He does not force our obedience and we should not try to force others into obedience either. (Note: if a person continues in unrepentant sin they could be excommunicated from the Church; there are guidelines in the Word on how to deal with this in the proper way.) God desires that we obey Him of our own free will. This is acceptable to Him. As believers, the Word and Spirit of God must be our guidelines for truth.

We must be careful that we do not let others use the covering doctrine to bring us into condemnation or bondage. Our relationship with each other in the body of Christ should not have this type of dependency that this teaching so often brings with it. God wants believers working interdependently in the body of Christ, not

having dependency on each other for things that only He can give. God does not want us to look to man, but all of us looking collectively to Him. We should only follow leadership as they follow Christ. (*1 Corinthians 11:1*).

Although some may accept and practice the commandments given by man under this teaching because they think they are following godly leadership, some may be setting themselves up to be controlled by others who would abuse them with this kind of power. Whenever the word cover, covered or coverings is mentioned in the bible, it is never in the context that a human can spiritually “cover” another human. God is the only one who has such divine ability to do so. God covers our sins with the blood of Christ. (*Romans 4:7*) God covers us with His Spirit. (*Isaiah 30:1*) He covers us with His wings for protection. (*Psalms 91:4*)

The only time in the New Testament that the word cover appears in a spiritual context is 1 Peter 4:8 where love will cover a multitude of sins, given in the context that love will pardon sin or not impute sin against others. In *1 Corinthians 11:1-16* when the word cover or covering is mentioned it is in regard to literal coverings of the head that men and women wear. Especially in regard to women, in the Greek the translation for the word covering is a literal veil that women wore over their heads. Paul here is not talking about spiritual coverings. Proof that he is talking about something physical is that he concludes that a woman’s hair is her covering. (verse 15) Only those women who had shorn hair (or shaved heads) were to cover their heads for proprieties sake. It was a matter of custom and social propriety, not for spiritual reasons. If we would stop and think about it, how could a person spiritually cover another person anyway? Only God can protect us 24/7 and only He can judge the motive of our hearts. We are all fallible, only God is infallible. Therefore only God is in the position to really cover us.

Those who believe this teaching go around asking, “Who is your covering?” or they say that “so-and-so” is their covering. By this I’m sure they want to know whom you are accountable to or letting you know to whom they are accountable. The truth is brethren, we are all accountable to one another and to God, but we do not have to concoct a teaching that has no scriptural basis in order to be men-pleasers and hold power over one another. The Body of Christ is not a hierarchal system, but a body of believers that are to be submitted to one another in love. Authority is given by the Lord for spiritual purposes in His Kingdom and is not to be misused. We are not to put our trust in the arm of the flesh (ours or anyone else’s) but only in the Lord. (*Jeremiah 17:5*) –By Denise Bostic