

Weapon of war?

for your consideration: headcoverings

by Sandra Higley

Editor's note: While this was my personal experience, I do not mean to imply that this is the only legitimate interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:3-16. Rather, we offer it as an interesting possibility on a frequently overlooked prayer passage.

"Hey, sis, I want to tell you a true story" my brother, Chuck, raised his voice in an attempt to be heard over the rush of wind coming through the open windows of his vehicle. My friend, Sharon, and I had spent the last several days prayerwalking some strategic strongholds in the area. Now my brother, a missionary to Indonesia, was chauffeuring us to the Yogyakarta airport where we would depart for Bali on the second leg of our 1997 10/40 Window prayer journey.

The oppressive heat and humidity made closing the windows impractical, so I nodded and strained to hear what he wanted to share. Sharon sat in the seat behind us taking in the Indonesian countryside as it hurtled by. Sharon is almost completely deaf. She wears hearing aids and can hear only if she is looking at you straight on, reading lips as she goes. Maybe because of that, the Lord has given her an incredible ability to hear with her spiritual ears, making her an invaluable intercessor and prayer partner. Now sitting in the back seat, wind roaring through the car and unable to see our faces, her participation in the conversation was impossible.

"There was this preacher," my brother continued, "who was invited to speak at some special meetings. After he finished, some of the men from the host church asked him to come with them to pray for a woman who was demonized. She was confined to her bed and in a serious state. The men explained that they had tried again and again to rebuke and cast out the demons afflicting the woman but with no success. The preacher entered her room where she thrashed and convulsed on the bed before him. He looked at her, sized up the situation, plopped a handkerchief on her head and then promptly and with little effort commanded the demons to leave in Jesus' Name. Instantly the demons responded, leaving the woman sane and lucid.

"What happened?" the men asked incredulously. "Why did the demons leave so quickly for you now when we prayed with no results?"

"The preacher opened his Bible to 1 Corinthians 11 and began to share his understanding of the passage. 'Man's head represents Christ. A woman represents the glory of mankind' (v. 7). When I covered her head, I was symbolically covering the glory of mankind so that the glory of Christ would be pre-eminent. I did this to demonstrate to the angels Whose authority we were representing (v. 10)."

"Sis," my brother leaned closer to me to emphasize his point, "it's not just the elect angels who are watching, it's the fallen ones as well."

I glanced back at Sharon but she continued to look out the window. I let my brother's words soak in. I had grown up in a church with a strong head covering tradition. Many variations of interpretations were held even within that small group of believers, but the general consensus was that headcoverings were to be worn as an expression of submission to husbands. This opened up a stream of questions: Were single women exempt? Were they only to be worn if we prayed out loud? What if men weren't in the room?

I was aware that other church traditions taught that this passage was strictly cultural and that it referred to a woman having a shaved head or short hair instead of long hair. But those interpretations left questions of their own.

With endless arguments over what was proper and mandates handed down based on unclear teaching of the passage, headcoverings—;for me at least—;had as much appeal and felt as oppressive as an Islamic burka. When I started attending a fellowship of believers who left the interpretation up to each woman individually, I opted to ditch the doily. It really was hard to have your hair look nice wearing that crazy thing! But this story my brother was telling me rang true. The theological explanation made sense—in fact, I found it beautiful! I knew I couldn't dismiss his words without praying about them first.

Sharon and I had been fasting and seeking the Lord about this prayer journey for almost a year in advance of our departure. During that time we heard from the Lord that we would receive instructions and weapons of warfare as we went along. We were not to make hotel reservations or (with only a few exceptions) plan in advance where we would pray. The Lord would show us each step. As two women alone on the other side of the world (we only stayed with my brother one night) and with no one aware of our itinerary, it was the most daringly intense but exciting thing I've ever experienced. I was anxious to talk to Sharon about this new development—;was the Lord trying to tell us something through my brother?

Can You Hear Me Now?

It wasn't until we settled in our seats on the plane to Bali that Sharon and I got to talk. "Sharon, I have to tell you what my brother shared on the way to the airport." I faced Sharon to make sure that she could clearly see my lips and understand my words.

She stopped me before I could say more. "I already know what he said! I couldn't believe that I could actually hear him from the back seat. When I heard what he was talking about, I got mad. I turned my hearing aids off so I wouldn't have to listen!" Sharon was from a similar church tradition as I, with an even stronger aversion to head coverings. She didn't want any part in the conversation.

"I turned my hearing aids off," Sharon repeated, "but, I could still hear him! After that, I figured it was something the Lord wanted me to hear, so I paid attention."

It was one of those moments when you know you've received marching orders. After we got settled in a hotel, we took off looking for something we could use as a headcovering. If this truly was from the Lord, we could waste no time. The streets were lined with shops filled with small idols, fetishes, incense and altars. We found a length of beautiful batik cloth that we cut into two triangles—;one for each of us.

Armed and Ready

The scarves were hot and bothersome, and we got a lot of really odd looks. But we were convinced that the Lord had given us specific instructions for the battle ahead.

Over the next few days we prayerwalked and took communion declaring Jesus Christ as Lord at many Hindu high places including the mother temple at Besakih. Wearing our scarves everywhere we went, we had unbelievable liberty to war in the Spirit at some major sites of spiritual importance. But we didn't understand the significance of our newly

acquired cloth weapons until we came to the Meditation Caves at Ubud.

Unseen Warriors?

As we approached the compound, we noticed signs posted declaring that this was a most holy site to them. Women were forbidden to enter during the time of their monthly cycle. As people came onto the grounds, they were handed a length of cloth—just like the one we had purchased outside our hotel. Everyone (men and women) were instructed to wrap the material around their hips like a skirt. We asked our guide about the significance of these cloths.

“This is a sarong,” he pointed to the cloth wrapped around his own frame. “As you enter a sacred area, you must wrap yourself in it. This part (here he indicated his loins) must be covered before you can approach the gods. The evil of man must be covered so that only man’s goodness is visible to the gods.”

As we stepped up to the gate, headcoverings firmly in place, we were allowed to pass without being handed a sarong—almost as if we were invisible! Shocked, we began to prayerwalk the area in full view of their holy men and proceeded to defile the altar with Communion elements. The three idols enshrined there—large phallus-shaped stones—were representations of Shiva-Linga, their demonic counterfeit of the Trinity.

Later as Sharon and I compared notes, the enormity of the symbolism gripped us. Led by the Spirit, we had unknowingly cut up what they used to cover the imperfections of mankind so that mankind would “look good” and used it to do just the opposite: cover the glory of mankind so that Christ’s glory would be revealed! We were stunned and thankful.

It’s Not Over ‘til It’s Over

Soon it was time to leave the island. We were anxious to lose the uncomfortable scarves and break our fast. After 10 days of a God-inspired dried-fruit-and-nuts-only diet, even airline food seemed appealing!

But as we found our seats, Sharon and I both felt prompted to wear the scarves and continue the fast during the 19-hour flight to Los Angeles. We weren’t sure why that was necessary until the occupant of the seat next to us took her place. She turned out to be a New Age shaman who had visited a tiny village on Java to channel spirits so she could return to the States to “cure” AIDS. The battle in the heavenlies continued!

What If?

I’m not legalistic. I believe I have incredible freedom in the Spirit, and I don’t wear a headcovering every time I pray. But when I’m battling the kingdom of darkness, I don’t forget that weapon of warfare I discovered in Indonesia—I have a scarf tucked neatly inside my purse in case I need it.

Consider: What if we’ve overlooked and misunderstood a powerful tool for battling the gates of hell? What if—just what if—this simple demonstration of declaring who is in authority to the angelic realms would unleash fresh power to do serious, irreparable damage to the enemy’s camp? Women, what if, through an act of willing humility, we were able to partner with Jesus Christ in a new level of kingdom authority—something our male counterparts are excluded from? What if?!

Headcovering, anyone?

*Aner – Greek word: (4.) Used generically of a group of both men and women. KJV NT Greek Lexicon.