



Doesn't the Bible say that men have authority over women?

No, it doesn't. The primary word used in the New Testament for authority is *exousia*. It means "power of choice and decision, power of ability, power of influence, power of rule or government." Let's look at one key passage that has caused some confusion, 1 Cor. 11:10.

*"For this reason, and because of the angels/messengers, the woman ought to have [a sign of] **authority on her own head.**"*

The passage is not about angels!

The word *angelous* can mean "angel" or "spy" (see James 2:25). In 11:10, if Paul meant "angels," then NO ONE knows what Paul was talking about! Probably, Paul was telling the church to be above reproach because antagonistic spies were entering the church to find fault with the church. Disorderly or immodest conduct would result in a bad report.

The passage is not about hats!

In many cultures, women wear hats, shawls, dupattas, or other head coverings. In the Corinthian context, hair and head coverings carried a cultural meaning. The words "a sign of" are not present in the Greek. The Greek text says, "the woman ought to have *authority on (exousia epi) her own head.*" A Christian woman has the authority to decide how to keep her hair or head covering in a modest way that gives the church a good reputation.

Exousia Epi

Exousia is used 103 times in the NT, it only occurs 14 times with the preposition *epe* (on/over).* In all of the Gospel passages using *exousia* related to Jesus, Jesus demonstrated his authority *over* nature, *over* sickness, *over* demons, etc. Similarly, the women of Corinth should exercise authority *on* their own heads. The women have the authority to determine how to honor Jesus culturally *when* they pray or prophesy in the church (1 Cor. 11:5).

EXOUSIA = AUTHORITY

Who does NOT have authority?

The only other time *exousia* is used in the NT with reference to men and women is in the context of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul does an amazing thing. He gives authority to both husband and wife - over each other's bodies!

*"The wife **does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband.**
In the same way, the husband **does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.**"*

What! Paul says both husband and wife have authority over *the other's body*. Interestingly, throughout the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 7, Paul shows the mutual duties and mirrored responsibilities of both husband and wife.

Conclusion

Jesus has ALL authority in heaven and on earth (*exousia epi*). Jesus gives his men and women disciples authority to make disciples of all nations. Jesus shares power, and we should too! **In Scripture, the word *exousia* is never used to express men's authority over women!**

* 14 Uses of Exousia Epi (authority on)

Matt. 9:6, Matt. 28:18, Mark 2:10, Luke 5:24, Luke 9:1, Luke 10:19, Acts 26:17, 1 Cor. 10:11, Rev. 2:26, Rev. 6:8, Rev. 11:6, Rev. 13:7, Rev. 14:18, Rev. 16:9.

Key Term

ἐξουσία

exousia = authority

4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?