

# Hair Debate

According to Paul, it was a disgrace for men to wear their hair long or for women to have theirs cut:

- ✧ 1 Corinthians 11:6 – *If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.*
- ✧ 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 – *Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.*

## Read the following excerpts from the novel, *Chop, Chop*:

To tell this story, I am going to have to start with Laci, and since it *starts* with me and Laci, and *ends* with me and Laci, you're probably going to think that it's a story *about* me and Laci. But you're wrong...it's not. Not really. But I can't just jump into what the story is about. I have to start at the beginning, and that does mean starting with Laci.

I've known her ever since we were in preschool and I remember hiding under the stairs with her and tasting Play-Doh. I realize that this sounds disgusting, but I'm going to have to be completely honest with you if anything good is going to come out of recalling this story. Telling this story is the most difficult thing I've ever had to do, and if nothing good is going to come of it, then I'd just as soon not go through with it at all.

Anyway, I remember hiding under the stairs and tasting Play-Doh with Laci. If you ask most grown-ups, they'll admit to tasting it too. That makes it especially disgusting when you think how many other kids had probably tasted it before we got to it, but for some reason, this is my earliest memory of me and Laci together.

Laci was (and still is) very pretty. I think I have probably always realized this, even before I was old enough to be interested in girls, but Laci

has never been worried about her looks. Instead, Laci has always worried about other people.

When she was four years old, her mother was watching a talk show on TV and it featured people who were cutting their hair off and sending it to Locks of Love to be made into wigs for children who, for various medical reasons, did not have any hair. Four-year-old Laci apparently took one look at a little girl on that show who had no hair, made the giant mental leap that she could help, and insisted that her mother help her cut off her long, pretty, brown hair so that they could send it to Locks of Love. She still has the little thank-you card that they sent her in return.

I don't remember any of this, but I'm told that the next day she showed up at preschool and I thought we had a new boy in our class. When my mom picked me up that afternoon the preschool teacher told her: "*David really freaked out today....*"

Apparently, even after the teacher calmed me down, I refused to have anything to do with Laci and I never hid under the stairs with her and tasted Play-Doh again. Like I said, I have no memory of this, but my mother thinks the story is quite funny and she's told it so many times that I figure it must be true.

I do remember though, in the second grade, telling Laci that I liked her hair long. She had grown it back and it was cascading down past her shoulder blades. She smiled at me and said "Thank you, David," but apparently she didn't care too much what I thought because she whacked it all off again a few weeks later. Evidently, Laci thought that her head was a hair farm.

It had grown out long again by the time we were in the fifth grade. In addition to preschool and elementary school, Laci and I went to church together too. One day, in Sunday school, our teacher was talking to us about the importance of giving. One of the students said that what Laci was doing – growing her hair out and donating it – was another way of giving to others. The teacher thought this was an excellent point, but I didn't agree.

"Why on *earth* not, David?" the teacher wanted to know.

"Because," I explained, "it says in the Bible that when you give to the needy you're not even supposed to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing...you're supposed to give in secret." The teacher looked surprised. She probably thought I never paid attention during lessons.

"You're only supposed to let *God* know what you're doing," I went on. "*Everybody* knows what she's doing."

“Well, I suppose that technically you’re correct, David,” the teacher said, “but what Laci’s doing is kind and very giving and there’s really no way for her to do it in secret.”

“That’s not true,” I argued. “She doesn’t have to cut it so short and make herself look like a *boy*. She just does that so everyone will know that she’s giving it to Locks of Love.”

“She could get her hair cut shorter in a way that looks *nice*,” and I glared at her as I emphasized the word nice, “and then people would just think that she’s had a haircut. No one would even have to know what she did with it after it was all cut off.”

I don’t remember what the teacher said to me, but I do remember that Laci looked down at her hands which were folded in her lap. I felt a little twinge of guilt (but not much) and for some reason I felt quite proud of myself when she came to school a few months later with her hair in a short, but feminine, bob.

*The summer before their seventh grade year, Greg moves to town. He and David quickly become friends. One day they are talking about Laci. In this scene, David is explaining to Greg about Laci’s regular donations to Lock of Love.*

“That’s pretty cool that she does that,” Greg said when I had finished.

“I suppose...” I agreed somewhat reluctantly.

“We should do that.”

“Do what?”

“You know...grow our hair out and donate it to Locks of Love.”

I must have looked at him blankly.

“You know,” he held out two fingers in a “V” and moved them together like scissors, cutting. “Chop, chop.”

“*What?*”

“We should grow our hair out and donate it to—”

“Are you *CRAZY?!?*”

“Nooo,” he said, shaking his head and looking perplexed. “Why?”

“Because we’re *BOYS*...”

“So?”

“Soooo...boys don’t grow their hair long and donate it to Locks of Love!”

“Why not?”

“Because,” I said again, “we’re *BOYS!*”

He waved his hand at me as if he were dismissing me. “A lot of guys wear their hair long.”

“Not that long!” I argued.

“Sure they do,” he said and then he shrugged. “I think it’s a good idea.”

“You’re crazy.”

“No, I’m not,” he said, moving his fingers like scissors again. “Chop, chop!”

And that was the start of Greg’s hand signals.

Greg’s hand signals went far beyond the thumbs up for “good job”, or the okay symbol, or even twisting an imaginary sharpener around a pencil to see if you had one to loan him during a quiz. Every hand signal that Greg thought up *meant* something. Something funny or something that was important or something that he wanted you to think about.

I didn’t understand that right away. For the next couple of months he’d catch my eye in science class and give me the “chop, chop” signal. I usually just waved him away or shook my head. Sometimes I gave him the universal “you’re crazy” sign by twirling my finger around the side of my head, but I’d had two haircuts since our talk on the curb when I finally noticed that his hair was curling down over his ears and touching the collar on the back of his shirt.

“You aren’t really going to let your hair get that long, are you?” I asked him at lunch.

“Yes, I am,” he said matter-of-factly.

“Oh, boy,” I replied. “You’re really losing it, you know that?”

“No I’m not,” he said, shaking his head. “You should do it too.”

*Chop, chop.*

## Debate the following questions:

In light of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15, was wrong for Greg to grow his hair long to donate it to Locks of Love?

In light of 1 Corinthians 11:6, was it wrong for Laci to cut her hair short?

In addition to the excerpt from *Chop, Chop* that you have just read, you may also want to consider the following points when forming your arguments:

- ✕ Leviticus 19:27 – *Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.*

A Nazirite who had made a vow to God was not to allow a razor to touch his hair until the vow had been completed. After the vow had been completed, his hair was shaved and thrown into the fire underneath the sacrifice of the offering he presented to God:

- ✕ Numbers 6:5 – *During the entire period of his separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the Lord is over: he must let the hair of his head grow long.*

Sampson had long hair:

- ✕ Judges 13:5 – *because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.*
- ✕ Judges 16:15-17 – *Then she said to him, “How can you say, “I love you,” when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.” With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything. “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”*

Cutting off another man's beard was considered an insult:

- ✧ 2 Samuel 10:4-5 – *So Hanun seized David's men, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away.*

Absalom had long hair:

- ✧ 2 Samuel 14:25 – *In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. Whenever he cut the hair of his head – he used to cut his hair from time to time when it became too heavy for him – he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard.*

Those who were bald were often mocked:

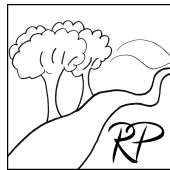
- ✧ 2 Kings 2:23-25 – *From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. "Go on up, you baldhead!" they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!" He turned around, looked down at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.*

Shaving one's head was often a sign of mourning:

- ✧ Isaiah 15:2 – *Dibon goes up to its temple, to its high places to weep; Moab wails over Nebo and Medaba. Every head is shaved and every beard cut off.*

As a symbol of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel shaved off his hair:

- ✧ Ezekiel 5:1 – *Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair with fire inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword.*



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