

What About... Coloring Your Hair?

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Let me guess. You want to know why on earth I would choose to write about this. Oh, I don't know, no particular reason. I just happen to come across a Christian article on it, and since hair coloring is so common, I thought I'd throw in some thoughts.

First a Few Stats

Hair coloring is a very old practice. Most think the Egyptians were the first to color their hair. They apparently used various plant extracts. One article said that in the Roman Empire women dyed their hair with pigeon dung. Of the world's population, 75-84% have naturally black hair, 11% are naturally brunette, 3% are naturally blonde, and only 2% have naturally red hair (holleewoodhair.com). Although hair coloring is still mostly done by women, more men are doing it. On January 29, 2014, Kavita Daswani reported in the "Los Angeles Times," "11% of men ages 50 to 64 now color their hair" (latimes.com).

Some Biblical Considerations

1. Although it was going on at the time, the Bible says nothing about hair coloring. So, we have to go at it from peripheral comments. But we can conclude initially that no biblical author thought it was significant enough to comment on.
2. Before he anointed David to be king, the Lord told Samuel, "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). *Heart* usually refers to our most basic moral desires. It would seem that the reason for doing what we do is significant to God. Sometimes outward acts are in-and-of themselves significant, but since hair coloring is never mentioned, we can assume what's significant is the reason for it, not the fact of it. It is also possible that not coloring hair may be done to draw attention to yourself the way the Pharisees would neglect their appearance so they will be noticed by men (Matthew 6:16; see also 23:28). *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31).
3. Paul said, *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God* (1 Corinthians 10:32). Does coloring hair offend people? Well, wild pink, purple, and yellow stripes or blotches might. But keeping your hair a natural color? In most circles today, it's probably not offensive.
4. Paul went on to say, *just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved* (1 Corinthians 10:33). For example, if you have red or blond hair and are ministering in a country where everyone has black hair, it might profit the gospel to color your hair.
5. The usual reason men or women color their hair is simply to look better. Paul addressed the subject of the appearance of women. *Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments* (1 Timothy 2:9). First, notice Paul said, *I want women to adorn themselves...*, not neglect themselves. *Adorn* is the word *κοσμεῖν* (*kosmein*) meaning "adorn, arrange, or set in order," from which English gets the word "cosmetics." Then Paul said adornment is best done *modestly* (or respectably) and *discreetly* (with wisdom or good sense). Braided hair is a bad translation. It's the word for an "elaborate hair style." If we apply all this to hair coloring, we should ask: "What is adorning without being elaborate?"

Conclusion

I see nothing in the Bible prohibiting hair coloring. It's all about motives. Coloring hair should not intentionally offend people, hinder the gospel, or draw attention. It should *adorn...modestly and discreetly*.

