THE QUESTION

Did the early church forbid women from trimming their hair at all?

Asked by a THF member on June 24, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 7 numbered quotations · the 17 early Christian passages and 90 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-forbid-women-from-trimming-their-hair-at-all

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

These passages do not settle a small trim. Early writers say it is shameful for a woman to be shaved or shorn, and they set closely cut hair against long, flowing hair. They praise hair kept simply and naturally and warn against showy styling, but none of them speaks about trimming the ends.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Being shaved or shorn shames a woman

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian repeats Paul's teaching that it is shameful for a woman to be shaved or shorn. He applies it to unmarried young women as well as wives, and he sets closely cut hair against the flowing hair that suits a boy.

1

"If it is shameful for a woman to be shaved or shorn, then of course it is so for a virgin as well."

later in the same passage

"Therefore let the world, the rival of God, see to it, if it claims that closely cut hair is graceful on a virgin in the same way that flowing hair is on a boy."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Veiling of Virgins* 7 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 9, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Hair marks a difference between men and women

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian gives reasons why a man does not cover his head. One is that nature has not given him extra hair, and that being shaven or shorn is no shame for him. By contrast, it is a shame for a woman.

2

"That is because nature has not given him excess of hair, because it is not shameful for him to be shaven or shorn, because the angels did not transgress on his account, and because Christ is his Head."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Veiling of Virgins* 8 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 10, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 7

God meant women's hair to grow naturally

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says God wanted women to rejoice in their locks growing naturally, as a horse does in its mane, while men were given beards. He treats a woman's natural hair as part of how God made her.

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3 “For God wished women to be smooth, and to rejoice only in their locks growing naturally, as a horse in its mane.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 2, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Simple, modest care is enough

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement tells women to look after their hair and fasten it simply. What he condemns is showy braiding and curling, which he says actually cuts and pulls out the hair. His concern is vanity, not ordinary care.

4 “It is enough for women to protect their hair and fasten it simply at the neck with a plain hairpin, caring for modest hair in a simple way for the sake of true beauty.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 3, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

Cutting for need, not for looks

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Writing about men's hair, Clement says trimming should be done because it is needed, not for appearance, such as keeping hair out of the eyes. He is not speaking of women here, but it shows how he weighed the reason behind a cut.

5 “Since trimming should be done not for the sake of appearance, but because it is necessary, the hair on the head should be cut so that it does not grow so long that it hangs down and gets in the way of the eyes.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 5, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
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POINT 6 OF 7

Showy hairstyles were the bigger worry

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian warns that a Christian woman should not adorn herself too much or crown her head with fancy arrangements of her hair. Like Clement, he aims his warning at seductive display.

6

> “Therefore a woman, taking counsel from the apostles' foresight, will not adorn herself too elaborately, so that she may not either be crowned with any exquisite arrangement of her hair.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *De Corona* 14 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 12, page 5** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Hair is God's ornament for the head

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius says God covered the head with hair and set it like an ornament on the top of the body. This fits the early view that hair is a good gift to be kept with care.

7

> “Therefore, God covered the head with hair. And because it was to be at the very top, He added it like an ornament to the highest point of the building.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *On the Workmanship of God* 7 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- No passage here says whether trimming the ends of long hair counts as being shorn.
- These writers spend more words on veiling and modest styling than on exactly how much hair may be cut.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 17 early Christian passages and 90 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–17, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 18–96, in Bible order), then 11 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *17 passages from 7 writers*

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 1*

1 *Fragments of Tatian* 1 (on point 6) "talk, and immoral words, and that these are punished and corrected by the Word. He also said that women were punished because of their hair and ornaments by a power… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 2–7*

2 *Instructor* 3.3 **Quote 3, page 3** them, how womanly that is. In truth, unless you saw them naked, you would suppose they were women. For although they are not allowed to wear gold, yet from effeminate… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Instructor* 3.11 **Quote 4, page 3** "is enough for women to protect their hair and fasten it simply at the neck with a plain hairpin, caring for modest hair in a simple way for the sake… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 6) has advanced so far that not only are women driven mad by this empty pursuit, but men too have caught the same disease. Because they are not free from the… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Instructor* 3.11 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "the hair on the chin is not to be disturbed, as it gives no trouble, and lends to the face dignity and paternal terror… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Instructor* 3.11 (on point 5) "keep the hair on his chin. Twisted locks should not hang far down from the head, falling into womanish ringlets. A full beard is enough for men. And if a… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Instructor* 3.3 (1885 English; on point 2) "these, for the most part, plucking out the rest of their hair, only dress that on the head, all but binding their locks with fillets like women… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 8–12*

8 *On Prayer* 22 (on point 2) "in the genus. Again, while he says that nature herself, 1 Corinthians 11:14, which has given hair as a covering and ornament to women, teaches that veiling is the… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *On the Veiling of Virgins* 7 **Quote 1, page 2** "it is shameful for a woman to be… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *On the Veiling of Virgins* 8 **Quote 2, page 2** "all these opposite points, the result is that a man is not to cover his head. That is because nature has not given him excess of hair, because it is… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *On the Veiling of Virgins* 17 do not quite reach to the ears. If they are so weak in hearing that they cannot hear through a covering, I pity them. Let them know that the whole… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *De Corona* 14 **Quote 6, page 4** "she ought not to appear with her head uncovered on account of the angels, much more with a crown on it will she offend those elders who perhaps are then… [continues online] **read ›**

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Dionysius of Alexandria, *c. 232–265 AD · source 13*

13 *Miscellaneous Fragments* 1 (on point 7) “the hair is a kind of protection and covering for the whole head, and the beard is a… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · source 14*

14 *Treatises* (on point 6) is changed into a lie by the deceitful dyes of cosmetics? Your Lord says, "You cannot make one hair white or black." Matthew 5:36 And yet, in order to… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 15*

15 *Writings* (on point 6) pursue vanity with all the pomp of the devil. At the mirror you adorn yourself, with your curled hair turned back from your brow. And moreover, with evil purposes, you… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *On the Workmanship of God* 7 **Quote 7, page 4** an ugliness there would be in that is clear from baldness. Therefore, God covered the head with hair. And because it was to be at the very top, He added… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *On the Workmanship of God* 7 (on point 7) incomplete and weak. But where there is reason and the hand, that part is not as necessary as a covering of hair. So perfectly are all things arranged, each in… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *79 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

18 **Genesis 24:65** and said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the plain to meet us?” The servant said, “This is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. **read ›**

19 **Exodus 26:7** And you shall make skins of hair as a covering over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven skins. **read ›**

20 **Exodus 26:13** A cubit on this side and a cubit on that side, from what is left over of the skins, from the length of the skins of the tabernacle, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that, so that it may cover it. **read ›**

21 **Exodus 28:14** and you shall make two tassels of pure gold, interwoven with flowers, braided work; and you shall put the braided tassels on the settings, at their shoulder straps in front. **read ›**

22 **Exodus 36:30** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

23 **Exodus 38:8** He made the bronze washbasin and its bronze base from the mirrors of the women who fasted, who fasted by the doors of the tabernacle of witness on the day he set up the tabernacle. (Septuagint Exodus 38:26 (Exodus 38:8 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

24 **Leviticus 13:29** If a man or a woman has a plague of leprosy on the head or in the beard, **read ›**

25 **Leviticus 13:30** the priest shall look at the plague, and behold, if its appearance is deeper than the skin, and there is thin yellowish hair in it, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a broken patch, a leprosy of the head or a leprosy of the beard. **read ›**

26 **Leviticus 13:33** then the skin shall be shaved, but the broken patch shall not be shaved; and the priest shall set apart the broken patch seven days a second time. **read ›**

27 **Leviticus 13:37** But if the broken patch stays as it was in its place, and black hair has sprung up in it, the broken patch is healed; he is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean. **read ›**

28 **Leviticus 13:40** If anyone’s head loses its hair, he is bald; he is clean. **read ›**

29 **Leviticus 13:41** If his head loses its hair in front, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean. **read ›**

30 **Leviticus 13:45** As for the leper in whom the plague is, let his garments be loosened and his head uncovered; let him put a covering about his mouth, and he shall be called unclean. **read ›**

31 **Leviticus 14:9** On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—his head, his beard, and his eyebrows; all his hair he shall shave off—and he shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean. **read ›**

32 **Leviticus 18:17** You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter; you shall not take that woman’s son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter to uncover their nakedness, for they are your close relatives; it is ungodliness. **read ›**

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33 **Leviticus 19:27** You shall not cut the hair of your head into a round tuft, nor spoil the appearance of your beard. **read ›**

34 **Leviticus 21:5** You shall not shave your heads bald for the dead; and they shall not shave the appearance of their beard, nor cut gashes in their flesh. **read ›**

35 **Numbers 4:13** He shall put the cover on the altar, and they shall spread over it a cloth wholly of purple. **read ›**

36 **Numbers 5:18** And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put into her hands the sacrifice of memorial, the sacrifice of jealousy; and in the priest's hand shall be this water of proof that brings the curse. **read ›**

37 **Numbers 6:5** all the days of his purification. No razor shall come upon his head until the days that he vowed to the Lord are fulfilled; he shall be holy, letting the hair of his head grow long, **read ›**

38 **Numbers 6:9** And if anyone dies suddenly beside him, the head of his vow shall at once be defiled; and he shall shave his head on the day he is cleansed; on the seventh day he shall be shaved. **read ›**

39 **Numbers 6:18** Then the one who has vowed shall shave the head of his vow at the doors of the tabernacle of witness, and put the hair on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. **read ›**

40 **Deuteronomy 21:12** and you bring her into your house, then you shall shave her head and trim her nails, **read ›**

41 **Deuteronomy 25:12** you shall cut off the hand; your eye shall not spare her. **read ›**

42 **Judges 9:49** So every man of them also cut down a branch, and they followed Abimelech and put the branches against the meeting place, and set the meeting place on fire over them; and all the men of the tower of Shechem died as well, about a thousand men and women. **read ›**

43 **Judges 16:17** Then he told her all his heart and said to her, "No iron has ever come upon my head, for I have been a holy one of God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like all other men." **read ›**

44 **Judges 16:19** Delilah made Samson sleep on her knees, and she called a man and shaved off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to humble him, and his strength left him. **read ›**

45 **Judges 16:22** But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. **read ›**

46 **1 Samuel 1:12** As she went on praying before the Lord, Eli the priest watched her mouth. **read ›**

47 **1 Samuel 1:16** Do not count your slave a troublemaking daughter; for out of the abundance of my complaint I have kept on until now." **read ›**

48 **1 Samuel 1:26** and she said, "Please, my lord, as your soul lives, I am the woman who stood here before you, with you, while praying to the Lord. **read ›**

49 **2 Samuel 10:4** So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off their beards, and cut off their cloaks in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. **read ›**

50 **2 Samuel 14:26** When he cut the hair of his head—he cut it from time to time, because it was heavy on him—when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels by the king's shekel. **read ›**

51 **2 Samuel 17:19** And the woman took a covering and spread it over the mouth of the pit, and spread ground grain on it to dry; and nothing was known. **read ›**

52 **1 Kings 8:38** every prayer, every plea, whatever comes from any man, as each one knows the plague of his own heart, and he spreads out his hands toward this house, **read ›**

53 **1 Chronicles 19:4** So Hanun took David's servants and shaved them, and cut off half of their cloaks as far as the tunic, and sent them away. **read ›**

54 **Ezra 4:17** Then the king sent to Rehum the baltam, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their fellow slaves who live in Samaria and the rest beyond the River: "Peace." And he says, **read ›**

55 **Job 9:1** Then Job answered and said: **read ›**

56 **Job 12:6** all who provoke the Lord, as though there will be no examination of them. **read ›**

57 **Job 16:8** It has become a witness, and my falsehood has risen up in me; it has answered against me to my face. **read ›**

58 **Psalms 103:20** Bless the Lord, all you his angels, mighty in strength, who do his word, to hear the voice of his words. (Septuagint Psalm 102:20 (Psalm 103:20 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

59 **Proverbs 2:8** to guard the ways of ordinances; and he will preserve the way of those who revere him. **read ›**

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60 **Ecclesiastes 3:19** And indeed to them belongs the event of the sons of man and the event of the beast; one event is theirs. As the death of the one, so also the death of the other; and there is one breath for all. And what advantage has the man over the beast? None; for all is vanity. **read ›**

61 **Song of Solomon 4:6** until the day breathes and the shadows move. I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. **read ›**

62 **Isaiah 3:17** God will also humble the leading daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their form in that day; **read ›**

63 **Isaiah 7:20** In that day the Lord will shave the head and the hair of the feet with the razor hired beyond the river, the razor of the king of the Assyrians, and he will take away the beard. **read ›**

64 **Jeremiah 7:29** Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lament on your lips; for the Lord has rejected and thrust away the generation that does these things. **read ›**

65 **Jeremiah 25:23** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

66 **Jeremiah 47:5** Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon has been cast away, and the remnant of the Anakim. (Septuagint Jeremiah 29:5 (Jeremiah 47:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

67 **Jeremiah 48:37** Every head in every place will be shaved, and every beard will be shaved, and all hands will beat the breast, and on every waist there will be sackcloth. (Septuagint Jeremiah 31:37 (Jeremiah 48:37 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

68 **Ezekiel 5:1** And you, Son of man, take for yourself a sword sharper than a barber's razor; you shall acquire it for yourself, and you shall bring it upon your head and upon your beard; and you shall take a balance of weights and divide them. **read ›**

69 **Ezekiel 40:19** And he measured the breadth of the court, from the open court of the outer gate on the inside to the open court of the gate facing outward, a hundred cubits, of the gate facing east. And he brought me to the north, **read ›**

70 **Ezekiel 44:20** And they shall not shave their heads, and they shall not pluck out their hair; they shall surely cover their heads. **read ›**

71 **Daniel 4:9** "Belteshazzar, chief of the enchanters, I know that the Holy Spirit of God is in you, and no mystery is too hard for you: hear the vision of the dream that I saw, and tell me its interpretation. **read ›**

72 **Susanna 1:32** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

73 **Luke 3:5** Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked places shall become straight, and the rough ways shall become smooth roads. **read ›**

74 **Acts 3:18** But the things which God announced beforehand through the mouth of all his prophets, that the Christ should suffer, he fulfilled in this way. **read ›**

75 **Acts 3:22** For Moses indeed said to the fathers, 'The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; him you shall hear in everything he speaks to you. **read ›**

76 **Acts 7:20** At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. He was brought up for three months in his father's house. **read ›**

77 **Acts 17:6** When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the city rulers, crying out, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too. **read ›**

78 **Acts 18:5** When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. **read ›**

79 **Acts 27:4** From there we put to sea and sailed on the sheltered side of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. **read ›**

80 **Romans 16:6** Greet Mary, who labored much for us. **read ›**

81 **1 Corinthians 11:4** Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. **read ›**

82 **1 Corinthians 11:5** But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaved. **read ›**

83 **1 Corinthians 11:6** For if a woman is not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or be shaved, let her be covered. **read ›**

84 **1 Corinthians 11:7** For a man indeed ought not to have his head covered, because he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. **read ›**

85 **1 Corinthians 11:10** For this reason the woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels. **read ›**

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86 **1 Corinthians 11:13** Judge for yourselves: is it fitting for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? **read ›**

87 **1 Corinthians 11:14** Or does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? **read ›**

88 **1 Corinthians 11:15** But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because her hair is given as a covering. **read ›**

89 **Ephesians 5:1** Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children. **read ›**

90 **Hebrews 1:4** having become as much better than the angels as the more excellent name he has inherited is better than theirs. **read ›**

91 **Hebrews 1:7** And of the angels he says, “He makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” **read ›**

92 **Hebrews 2:5** For he did not subject the world to come, of which we speak, to angels. **read ›**

93 **Hebrews 2:7** You made him a little lower than angels; you crowned him with glory and honor; **read ›**

94 **1 Peter 3:22** who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him. **read ›**

95 **2 Peter 2:11** whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring a slanderous judgment against them before the Lord. **read ›**

96 **Revelation 10:1** I saw a mighty angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud. A rainbow was on his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *11 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 2:23 · 6:1

Matthew 6:5 · 10:30

1 Corinthians 4:7 · 7:34 · 11:3 · 11:16

2 Corinthians 10:13 · 13:5

Revelation 14:4

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early church forbid women from trimming their hair at all?” on June 24, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

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How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Did the early church forbid women from trimming their hair at all?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-forbid-women-from-trimming-their-hair-at-all. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 9.”

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THE END OF THIS STUDY