

## Women, Genesis 3:16 and Headship

*To the woman he said,  
“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;  
with pain you will give birth to children.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you.”*

Genesis 3:16 (NIV)

### Introduction

When our Lord Jesus died on the cross in love and obedience to the Father, and rose again from the dead, it was so that we may have newness of life. Therefore, when we come into Christ, the old has gone and the new has come.

The old is the selfish way, the way of sin. The new is the perfectly restored order of God under Christ Jesus. We are ‘*a new creation*’ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This New Life changes a man’s relationship to his wife and her relationship to her husband. It also renews our understanding of the roles of men and women. This study compares what God says to the woman about her life in Gen. 3:16 (that is, how it would be because of the Fall of man), with the original beauty of God’s creation. The Lord’s work is to restore His creation order in our lives.

**Goals:** 1. That men and women look at Christ to learn afresh about the role of headship. 2. That men carry out this role with love and humility. 3. That women find new courage in the Lord, to practise submission with faith and hope.

This teaching letter tries a new approach in presentation:

Message

Explanation

Details & References

The idea is to give you the detailed Scriptural proof, without overloading you with too much information. It is recommended that everyone reads through just the left **Message** column first, to get an overview.

Then, if you want to know more about any section, read the **Explanation**. For more detail or for verse references, look at the right hand column.

Of course, if you can make time to read everything, this will give you the most insight into the message.

## Message

### God's Creation Order

It is often assumed by commentators, that Paul is thinking about Genesis 3:16 when he speaks about the roles of men and women. However, this is an assumption. There is no evidence for that conclusion.

Our study seeks to show this: All the apostles based their understanding of our roles as men and women, not on Gen. 3:16 but on God's creation order, established at the beginning of creation.

This is logical, because God is not speaking of the beauty of the creation order in Gen. 3:16. In that verse the Lord talks about things that would come into our lives because of sin.

God speaks to the woman in Gen. 3:16 about the pains and difficulties that would become part of married women's lives as a **result of the Fall**.

In verses 17-19a the Lord then speaks of the pains and difficulties that men would face. Then in verse 19b God speaks to the man about physical death.

As representative of mankind, Adam, the man, bore the responsibility. Adam was responsible that death had come into the world.

## Explanation

If we want to know why things are as they are, we always need to go back to the beginnings. Paul was cross-cultural and revolutionary in his ministry, yet he did not dare to go beyond the order that God had established. In both of these sentences, we know (from the context) that Paul is teaching the church to keep God's order in their midst. Compare this with Genesis 3:16, which speaks only about the marriage relationship.

In other words, Paul was speaking to Timothy and to the Corinthians about the roles of men and women - that these roles come from the divine creation order. The creation order was not revoked (or removed) through the cross and resurrection. It will remain until Jesus returns. The apostles confirmed this creation order and drew principles for practical teaching from it. If we seek to be more modern than the way God made us, we make ourselves problems. The Lord wants to spare us from these.

We see the perfection of the creation order lasting only up to the point where Adam and Eve sinned and fell. After this, disorder came. So we only have a short section in the Bible of undisturbed harmony in the relationship between Adam and Eve. Before the fall we see both how it should be between a husband and his wife and also generally between men and women. Only the life of Jesus restores to us again the perfect picture of how men are to be in their attitude to women. If we let what we know of Christ's life shine into our hearts, with the help of His Spirit we can correct our wrong ideas of how we thought God meant it to be. This is particularly true of the creation story and the place of women. Wrong views have been passed on from one generation to the next.

There is no occasion where Christ, nor any of the New Testament writers quote Genesis 3:16 as being the reason for a man's headship. We find this neither quoted in regards to the relationship between husband and wife, nor in matters of church government and order.

Paul speaks to Timothy about his practice of not giving a woman directive authority over men. This included the ability to take the whole church i.e. male and female, in a new direction by being given an authoritative teaching role. The first reason he explains is the creation order. The second reason he gives is the deception in Eden. Paul does not use this failing in Eden, however, to make a case for a man's rule over the woman, as described in Genesis 3:16, because Christ's way of loving headship is not like man's rule.

## Details & References

*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

1 Timothy 2:12-14 NIV

*A man\* ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.*

1 Corinthians 11:7-9 NIV

*"Your desire will be for your husband. \* and he..."*

Genesis 3:16 NIV

\* Both the word **man** in this passage of Corinthians and the word **husband** in Genesis 3:16 have the same basic meaning. In Corinthians, it is the Greek word **aner** and in Genesis the Hebrew word **'iysh** (say eesh). Both of them mean **husband or man**. Both words are used for man in contrast to a woman. We understand whether it means 'man' or 'husband' **from the context**.

The other expression for man, in Greek **anthropos** and in Hebrew **'adam** never means husband. Both of these words are used in the sense of a **man or mankind in general**, a human-being. It is the word Jesus uses when He says He is the "Son of Man".

To help you see how the meaning of the words are found from the context, below is an example of both words in one sentence:

*And, behold, men [aner] brought in a bed a man [anthropos] which was taken with a palsy*

Luke 5:18 KJV

Some men (*aner*) came. They may have been married, we do not know, but the point is, they were not women. They brought a man (*anthropos*). The use of *anthropos* instead of *aner* shows us that, although he was a man and not a woman, his gender was secondary. The point was that a paralysed human-being desperately needed Jesus' help.

I find the following reasons for this:

- The basis for man's headship is God's creation order, whereas Genesis 3:16 has to do with events following the Fall.
- Genesis 3:16 speaks specifically about the relationship of a husband and wife.
- Genesis 3:16 does not speak about headship but rulership. There is a big difference, so we will look at the word 'rule' found in Genesis 3:16 later in this study.

*...And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

1 Timothy 2:14 NIV

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:22 KJV.

## Message

### Adam was held responsible

God spoke His commandment about the garden and the tree to the man Adam. Adam was given first place over God's creation - and Eve joined him at his side.

This is a picture of the man Jesus Christ, who is also God the Son, Lord of all. As the Son of Man He has now been given this responsibility for our sakes.

### Did God command Eve?

There is a common idea that God's statement to Eve in Genesis 3:16 was a commandment. Some think that God was ordering women to let their husbands rule over them.

However, let us remember that God's statement to Eve: "*he will rule over you*" came after Adam had just failed to be properly accountable to God.

If we say "*he will rule over you*" is a commandment, we must also follow this logic: We are also saying that God now chose to give more responsibility to Adam. But Adam had just shown that he was not willing to be held accountable for what he already had. Would God give more authority to such a person? Surely not!

## Explanation

When God spoke his first commandment to the man, the woman had not yet been formed from Adam's rib.

From the account given in Genesis, we draw this conclusion: Eve knew of the commandment by the time she was tempted, because her husband had told her what God had said to him.

We know that God continued to hold the man as the one accountable for knowing and keeping his commandment. Why? - Because when Adam and Eve hid in the garden after sinning, God first spoke to the man only, not to both. Adam had been alone when he was given the responsibility of having heard God's Word. Therefore Adam, having been made first, bore the responsibility for what was happening in the Garden.

Here are two further questions:

1. Why should God have given a further command to Eve at this stage? Had she not just fallen by disobeying the simplest of commandments?
2. If this were now God's second commandment to mankind following the beginning of creation, why would God say it to the woman instead of the man?

Adam was the one to whom God had given ultimate responsibility from the beginning. But the words "*he shall rule over thee*" are addressed to Eve.

God addressed the woman only after Adam had failed to accept his responsibility by blaming first God.

Then Adam blamed the woman.... before finally admitting to what he had done. Instead of saying, "*Yes I did eat from the tree. I have disobeyed you*", he tried to escape his responsibility.

Adam was in other words saying to God, "*If you had not given me that woman, and if she had not given me from that tree, I would not have done it.*"

Commands are always given to the one with headship and responsibility in the relationship. Up to the moment of the fall, Adam had been the head in a team relationship with Eve. They had equal worth. If it was God's will for Adam to now rule over Eve, we would expect God to have spoken to Adam about it, not Eve. However, in no verse does God command Adam to rule over his wife.

compare

## Details & References

*And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

Genesis 2:16-17 (KJV)

*And he said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"*

Genesis 3:11 (KJV)

For those who have the King James Version (KJV), it is useful to know this: when the words "*thee*" and "*thou*" (old English) are used, it means that one person only is being spoken to (i.e. singular). If it says in the KJV "*ye*" or "*you*", then it is speaking to more than one person (i.e. plural). The KJV translates this aspect of Hebrew and Greek sentences more accurately than modern English translations, which are unable to show this difference. However, if it is not clear from the context, some versions e.g. New International Version (NIV) occasionally add a footnote.

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*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Matthew 28:18 (NIV)

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*"...he shall rule over thee."*

Genesis 3:16 (KJV)

*"the woman you put here with me..."*

*"...she gave me some fruit from the tree..."*

*"...and I ate it."*

Genesis 3:12 (NIV)

These two words "*put here*" and "*gave*" are the same word in Hebrew: *nathan* = to give (you gave, she gave)

*You too may be able to look up words in the same Hebrew and Greek Dictionary that is used in this study. It is called Strong's Concordance and gives a key number to each word used in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. If you have internet access it is available on this website: <http://www.bju.edu/bible>*

e.g. "*... the LORD said to Moses*" appears 48 times in Exodus (NIV). God spoke to Israel through Moses.

*Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house.*

Hebrews 3:5 (NIV)

## Message

### Rulership

Before the Fall of man, Adam was Eve's head but not Eve's ruler.

The leadership role for the man in marriage, the family and the church taught by the apostles was based on this original creation order.

Rulership is not the same as headship. The word 'rule' found in Gen. 3:16 shows us the hardness of heart that would enter the relationship of men with their wives, because of sin.

If men think that the Bible wants them to rule, these things remain unchanged in family and church life:-

a) Men continue to lack sensitivity towards their wives and to have little understanding for them. A dominating attitude towards all women remains.

b) Wives live under-developed lives, both spiritually and intellectually. Women feel pressed down by men. This can lead to depression or rebellion.

c) In order to correct these things, some believers bring the philosophies of the world into the family and the church. Rather than restoring strength and beauty to these roles, the differences are said to be old-fashioned.

**Men - stop ruling!  
Learn to exercise the kind of leadership God gave you. It is called headship.**

## Explanation

The word "rule", in the phrase "*he shall rule over thee*" is the Hebrew word '*mashal*' which means '**To rule, to have dominion, to reign**'.

The first occurrence is in Genesis 1:16, when God set the greater light (sun) and lesser light (moon) *to rule* over the day and night. The word "rule" here (also in v.18) reminds us that man and animals are unable to do anything without the light given us by the sun and the moon, assisted by the stars. These lights have absolute authority over day and night.

The second occurrence of *mashal* is in Genesis 3:16

The third occurrence of *mashal* comes soon after, in Genesis 4:7, just fifteen verses after Genesis 3:16. Interestingly it is when Cain was angry with Abel. God warned Cain about his anger, that if he did not do well, he would sin.

Actually, not only does the word *mashal* (rule), appear again in Genesis 4:7, but also another word from Genesis 3:16 - the word *t'eshuqah* (desire)

The use of the word *mashal* in connection with Cain's anger and the eventual murder of his brother, causes us to understand that it is a very strong word. It means **mastery** over someone or something else. We can now see that it is a painful word to be used for the relationship between Adam and Eve that began with sensitivity and respect.

In the beginning Adam and his wife Eve were to have had dominion, to **rule together** over every living thing on earth. They were to have it in their control, to subdue it. But instead we find that Adam would begin to rule over Eve. Since then, men have thought that it is completely normal and manly to attempt to reign over their wives.

**Rulership of a man over his wife is not God's will.**

God the Father raised up his obedient beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from death. As the Son of Man, Jesus was given total authority to rule from Heaven's throne, not only over the heavens, but over the earth too - the place which God had given into man's responsibility (Gen. 2:15, Mat. 28:18, 1 Cor. 15:24-25). In grace God also raises up us who believe, to **reign (rule) with Christ, under His headship**, both now (Eph. 2:16) and in judgement (Rev. 2:26,27). Then we will live forever with Christ and the Father, each of us as part of Christ's bride, 'the wife of the Lamb' (Eph. 5:25-27, Rev. 21:9-14)

## Details & References

*And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [he made] the stars also.*  
Genesis 1:16 KJV

*"...thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee".*  
Genesis 3:16 KJV

*And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*  
Genesis 4:6-7 KJV

*But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*  
Genesis 4:7 NIV

The direct comparison of the situation in Genesis 4:7 with that in Genesis 3:16 by the use of the same words as in Genesis 3:16, is not seen in the NIV and other modern translations. Both speak about an unfortunate deterioration in a close relationship between Adam and Eve, (man and his wife) and between Cain and Abel (brothers). This link reminds us of Jesus's words in Matthew 5:21-24. The Lord shows us how anger and harshness damage the person to whom it is directed, breaking their confidence. This including a man's wife - in fact her more quickly than anybody.

The words of the last sentence of Genesis 4:7 is interpreted in different ways:  
The KJV indicates that **Abel** would long for ('*desire*') Cain, but Cain would dominate ('*rule over*') Abel.

Newer translations (e.g. NIV, NASB) interpret that **sin**, standing at the door of Cain's heart, longed for Cain but that Cain should dominate ('*master*') the sin.

*God blessed them, and said to them, "Be fruitful, and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule\* over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*  
Genesis 1:28 NIV

\* *rule* (Hebrew. *radah*) = **rule, have dominion, dominate, tread down**

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*  
Colossians 3:18 (KJV)

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (NIV)  
and be not bitter against them. (KJV)*  
Colossians 3:19

## Message

### A Poetic Pattern

Before we look at the theme of headship, let us examine more evidence to prove that rulership (Gen. 3:16) is not God's intention for the Christian marriage.

In order to be able to properly examine the statements God spoke in the Garden of Eden, after the Fall of man, we must compare them with each other. These three statements have a common pattern. When we recognise it, it will help us keep the statements in context. We will then no longer isolate one statement, or part of it, from the others.

## Explanation

The pattern of God's statements over the serpent, the woman and the man are as follows:

**1. Decree** about forthcoming *punishment* -

**what God was going to do:**  
"I will..."

Judgement from God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

**2. The Experience** that the one punished would have.

**3. Declaration** about the *consequences* -

**what others were going to do:**  
"he will, ...you will..."

A prophetic forth-telling from God, who knows all things.

Allowing consequences of one's action to happen is part of punishment. However, God's desire for mankind is that we will realise the terribleness of sin and turn to Christ to save us.

## Details & References

A decree is an authoritative word from a King or powerful ruler. It is either a command or a statement concerning a situation. The decision of the King is binding on all, including the King himself - see Daniel 6:15.

In the book of Esther we read of a decree which could **not** be *revoked*\* (\*Hebrew word is 'shuwb' = returned). However, by taking hold of new decree from the King, the people of God were victorious: See Esther 8:5 & 8 and compare Esther 3:13 with 8:11 & 12.

The victory of the Son of Man over death, and his entrance into Heaven for our sakes gave God the legal right to give us victory over the consequences of the Fall. He has done this, not only by forgiving us our sin, but by giving us His own Holy Spirit. He is our Counsellor who helps us overcome our flesh and obey the Lord.

The Bible speaks in several places of overcoming specific problems arising from the consequences of Gen. 3:16. Although the consequences are not removed, we can have victory in the midst of them through Christ. Jabez in the Old Testament is an example: His mother gave birth to him in great pain. His name (*Pain*) remained unchanged, but in faith he prayed. God heard and helped (1 Chr. 4:9-10). Other examples are 1 Tim. 2:15 (in child bearing) and chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians (marriage).

The verses in Gen. 3:14-19 have a pattern that binds them together (see arrows). Certain words are also repeated (e.g. pain, painful toil) or have a similarity in word structure or sound in Hebrew.

The following is from the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, showing the root of some of the words used.

pains = itstsabown  
- say "its-tsaw-bone"  
(from atsab)  
pain = etseb - say "eh'-tseb"  
(from atsab)

painful toil = itstsabown  
plants = eseb - say "eh-seb"

In the beginning God had provided fruit and seed in abundance for them to eat (Gen. 1:29 & 2:16). Eating "the plants of the field" would mean frustrating, painful labour for Adam. This was not the work of fruitful service for God as planned (Gen. 2:15-18).

crush = shuwph  
strike = shuwph - say "shoof"  
desire = teshuwaqah  
- "teshookah"  
(from shuwq)  
return = shuwb - say "shoob"

The decrees of punishment

Experiences of those punished

Genesis 3:14-19 (NIV)

**So the LORD God said to the serpent,**

*Because you have done this,*

"*Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals!*

*You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.*

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers,*

*He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

**To the woman he said,**

"*I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;*

*With pain you will give birth to your children.*

*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*

**To Adam he said,**

"*Because you have listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'*

*"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.*

*It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food*

*until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

Declarations of the consequences

## Message

### Desire, Disappointment and Despair

In judgement, God cursed the serpent. But God neither cursed the woman nor the man. Instead God choose to let his curse fall upon the earth from which the man had been taken. The result: God will burn both Satan and the earth with fire, but save all who believe in His salvation.

Adam and Eve did not go unpunished however. The effects of inherited sin continue to be felt by us, their descendants. In His justice, the Lord has caused every man and woman in every generation to experience the consequences of Adam's sin.

These include the experiences of unsatisfied desires, with disappointments and even despair during our lifetime.

A married woman feels this from time to time in her relationship with her husband. Those women with no husband, and also those who have had many men, know unfulfilled desires. The truth is that all men disappoint, except one - Jesus Christ.

When her emotions are hurting and her flesh is making itself felt, it needs daily grace for a woman to exercise a submissive attitude to her husband. The husband's natural reaction to his wife's disappointment in him is to justify himself and to rule over her.

## Explanation

Satan's decision to destroy God's perfect Creation, by deceiving the woman, would have inevitable consequences, which would seal the destiny of Satan. God knew beforehand what was going to happen. He had already chosen to use one man, born of a woman, that is Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of Man, born of Mary, would rise up and defeat Satan:

*"he will crush your head"*

However Satan was not going to give up without a fight against God's anointed and against all of us who are in Christ.

*"you will strike his heel"*

Do you see that these words are prophesying the consequences of Satan's actions? Seeing this will help you to understand the next verse better, Gen. 3:16. Just as God's judgement over Satan spoke prophetically about Satan's future, so he spoke prophetically about Eve's future. God spoke about how the Son of Man would overcome Satan at the cross. Also looking at the consequences for Eve in the future, God spoke about the difficulties that would come upon a woman in relating to her husband.

» **Problem:** The "natural desires" cause a **man** to seek his fulfilment in his **work**. He lives from his achievements.

» **Result:** a mixture of frustration and pride.

» **Answer:** Christ is the Bread of Life. His death and His life must become ours.

» **Problem:** The "natural desires" cause a **woman** to seek her fulfilment in her **husband**. She longs that her man will love her fully.

» **Result:** mixed emotions - the man whose identity she shares sometimes or often hurts her. And when problems come from elsewhere, her husband sometimes/ often fails her.

» **Answer:** Only Christ gives living water. He alone satisfies the inner thirst. He alone understands completely. He is patient and loving. Christ gives grace that lifts up and helps overcome.

The Lord said that the natural tendency of a woman would be desire for her husband. I believe this means that, because a wife is one flesh with her husband, she links her emotional state (feelings) with him. His natural reaction to this, especially when he is accused of failure, is sadly to rule over her. He responds to his wife's condition with harsh or frustrated words or actions.

This binding in one flesh is also present outside the marriage covenant, in wrong relationships. A woman's emotional commitment to the man traps her, as in a cage.

A woman has the God-given ability to give herself completely to the roles of wife and mother. This complete givenness is possible in other roles too. This can be for good (e.g. women missionaries) or for bad (e.g. witches, prostitutes).

The Lord Jesus treasured the dedication in love and devotion of those women who had turned to Him for help. Desire for Christ both saves and keeps all who continue in it.

## Details & References

*...the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*

Revelation 13:8 NIV

*"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses...he explained...*

Luke 24:26,27 NIV

*By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.*

2 Peter 3:7 & 11-12a NIV

*And the devil, who deceived them\*, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Revelation 20:10 NIV

\* the nations (see v.9)

Solomon wrote of his frustration: *'So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.'*

Ecclesiastes 2:17 NIV

This is the reality for all of us, unless we live for Christ and do all our work for Him:

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...*

Colossians 3:23 NIV

*For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.*

1 John 2:16-17 NIV

*Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

*"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

John 6: 29 & 33 NIV

*Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?"...*

*"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."*

Mark 14:4a & 6 NIV

*In Galilee those women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there\*.*

Mark 15:41 NIV (\* at Calvary)

## Message

### Headship

Christ, seeing and hearing us in our rebellion, gave His life to cleanse us from sin. He took our blame to release us from our guilt. His love has won the heart of His bride, the church.

Only when a husband longs for the Holy Spirit to fill him afresh with this love of Christ, will he be able to lead like Christ. Christ's leadership over His body, His bride, is **headship**.

Headship is a leadership role. When headship is part of a relationship of unity, then mutual trust and fruitfulness occur when >> the partner who has the role of 'body' submits itself to the head; >> the head selflessly loves the body.

The head seeks to be fully aware of the body's needs. It thinks, watches, listens, smells, speaks and directs movement for the sake of the body. The body works with this and can tell the head all it feels (e.g. pain).

The body and head do not compete with each other. As the body grows stronger it does not become independent, but still holds the head, communicates fully with it and obeys it.

Messages from your head encouraged your body to grow greatly in size during childhood. The head rejoiced in (and benefits from) the gradually increasing strength, fruitfulness, and maturity of the body.

## Explanation

Some relate the issue of headship only to marriage. Although we see that most of the people in leadership roles in the New Testament were men, including all of the apostles, the freedom of women to serve is treasured by many. My understanding is that this freedom is to be exercised in a spirit of humility and submission to male headship locally as embodied in the role of eldership. However, the male role of headship is most clearly seen in marriage.

In marriage two people who have different viewpoints and different ways of reacting to situations are bound into one body. In order for their unity to be workable, one person must have the final say. Is this to be the one with the strongest will? Or the one who can dominate the other through his or her control of words? Or through physical force? Or emotional manipulation?

The Scripture gives clear guidelines: Wives submit to your husbands. Husbands love your wives. However, what happens in situations where the wife does not feel loved by her husband? Has she then the freedom not to submit? What happens when the husband experiences that his wife does not show respect towards him as her head. How does he love her in that moment?

The answer is plain: 'Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.' It does not say 'because your husband is perfect'. And for husbands: 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her...' At what point did Christ give His life for the church? When she was already perfect? NO! It was when we, the church were unsaved and treated Christ like our enemy. We directed our heart's pride against Him. Our hurts fell on Him. Our rejection of His person became the reason for His death. It was at this point that Christ gave His life and it was at the resurrection that God the Father confirmed Christ as head. Because of His obedience in giving His life for His bride, God raised Christ from death and made Him Lord of all. Having made Him head over all things, God gave Christ to His Bride as her head. His blood had cleansed her. She was made clean by his sacrifice.

The reason that Peter and Paul wrote these instructions is because this attitude does not come naturally. A woman can easily justify herself with evidence why she should not submit to her husband. A husband can find all kinds of reasons to react in a harsh and unloving way to his wife. Both love and submission need faith. Both need the help of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

## Healing for head and body

We read in Ephesians 5:18 '*Do not get drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit*' (NIV). Most people who get drunk are seeking a way out of their misery (Prov. 31:4-7). They find that getting drunk (or taking drugs) takes their minds off the problems they cannot solve:- their husband's bad decisions, the father who ignores them; the unpaid bills; their wife's moods; the argument with their boss. However, drowning sorrows with alcohol or drugs to cure self-pity makes matters worse. It leads to debauchery (lack of control in every way).

The Lord's will is for us to overcome the depressive power of failure (of ourselves and others) by facing it in HIS power through a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a summary of Eph. 5:18-21 (NIV):

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery*

***Instead be filled with the Spirit***

1. *speaking* - *to one another*
2. *singing & making music in your heart* - *to the Lord*
3. *giving thanks for everything* - *to God*
4. *submitting* - *to one another*

Getting drunk and being filled with the Spirit both affect the way a person *speaks, thinks and acts*. Our natural reaction is to 'run away' from a problem, or express frustration and anger. We may not get drunk, but we slide back into old behaviour habits. However God has another way.

The steps that happen when a person drinks too much wine match what Paul says for fresh filling with the Holy Spirit. Yet we cannot be filled anew if we have never received Christ's Baptism of the Spirit (Acts 19:2, Eze. 36: 26, Luke. 3:16, 11:13). Also, we ought to drink from a clean cup: First, repent of sin and seek a way to put things right.

Compare the stages of someone becoming drunk with wine with the summary above (1-4):

1. *First the wine must touch the lips*  
Let us only speak to one another that which agrees with God's Word.
2. *Then the wine goes down the throat and gives a warm feeling around the heart.*  
Just as wine affects the emotions, so the Lord can touch and heal ours. Rise up to Him with a sacrifice of praise, not to impress people or to enjoy for yourselves but praise for HIM.
3. *Much wine gets hold of the mind.*  
Just as the attitude of the drinker to people around him and to circumstances changes, so we can give God our anxious thoughts by giving thanks (Compare Matthew 6:25).
4. *Consciousness is lost, the drunk slips to the floor.*  
The drunk person is lower than all around him. He no longer reacts in anger or self-defence, because he sleeps deeply.

When the Holy Spirit fills us, there is no disorder, as brought on by drunkenness, but God's order is established. We are awake and humble ourselves in order to hear our brethren and work with them.

**to submit** in Greek is *hupotasso* from *hupo* = under + *tasso* = to arrange.

So submission means 'to arrange under' (put oneself under). It speaks of order. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not about whether people submit to you or obey you. It is, however, about whether you submit to your brothers and sisters **out of reverence for Christ**.

**Wine and olive oil** in the Bible symbolise the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, the head was anointed with oil as a sign of God's choosing and the authority and power coming by the Holy Spirit. Here is another picture: the Good Samaritan. He poured oil and wine into the wounds of a man lying half-dead on the road. The man then needed time to recover and a place to be looked after. God can use you to care for others in His love and power. Or maybe you need such care!

## Message

### Humbled by realities

Christ, the head, has given headship to preserve stability, health and God's order for all within a family atmosphere. **Headship** is present in the men's roles of husband, family father (role till Mt. 19:5) & eldership. The gift of **leadership** and ministry gifts, however, are not limited to men. Women gifted by God in these ways will flourish under the kind of headship that is both loving and faithful. (Judges 5:1,2,9; 1Tim. 2:11,12)

**Only Christ deserves headship.** Yet, according to the creation order that God ordained, a) men are to demonstrate aspects of God's glory and b) women still show forth the glory of man - just as God planned.

This presents eternal truth:  
- Just as Christ portrays the glory of God (Heb. 1:3), so the church is to portray the glory of Christ.  
- Just as Jesus is the head of his body the church (Col. 1:18), so we his body, are Christ's "fullness" (Eph. 1:22).

Christ has been made head, not only of His body, but also "over everything for the church"!! As a result of his headship we, the church, will rule together with him. As we daily submit ourselves to his headship, we will enter our destiny, truly fulfilled and at rest.



## Explanation

In the Old Testament, family heads of larger family groups were called 'elders'. In Egypt, these were the ones whom Moses was sent to, for they held the final responsibility for their families. As the people moved out of slavery, other leaders grew up who gave vision and led Israel into action. However, the type of leadership called eldership increased again in importance as the families settled in the Promised Land. They held the responsibility for their town and met at their city gate, where they kept the oversight of all that happened. Here they could be easily found to help in time of need.

When the church spread in the New Testament, the apostles appointed elders in every town where they went. Even the church in Jerusalem was led by elders as time progressed. Just as social care flourished under the leadership role of the deacons, so the appointment of elders by apostles released them to their specific leadership role of apostleship. The apostles' role is to ensure that the foundation of the church is Christ. They proclaim His death and His resurrection under the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Jos. 4:20, Joh. 1:28 & 42).

As a man is head of his family, so male elders represent Christ's headship over the local expression of the church.

They are appointed because of their family life, particularly their role as father and husband. Their role is to provide stability, health and order in the church so that all, both weak and strong, can know that they are cared for.

The elders themselves may have other leadership roles e.g. apostolic (1 Pet. 5:1, 2 John 1:1), but also actively care for their local flock (Acts 20:28).

Elders are glad for other types of leadership to be aiding the growth and forwards movement of the church, particularly for the five ministries of Ephesians 4:11. Whether these other ministries are carried out by males only, or by females too, varies. However, the elders carry final responsibility for what happens in their 'family', that is in their local church. God holds them accountable and therefore has given them authority for protecting and feeding their local flock. God gives different types and areas of authority to other forms of leadership too, with accountability. The Lord's purpose is that the authority He has delegated will be carefully used to build up believers.

## Details & References

*Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.*

Exodus 3:16 NIV

*Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.*

Exodus 12:21 NIV

*...Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years, summoned all Israel - their elders, leaders, judges and officials...*

Joshua 23:1b-2

Elder: Hebrew word = *zagen*

a) old (of humans)

b) elder (of those having authority)

*Obey them that have the rule\* over you, and submit yourselves...*

Hebrew 13:17 KJV

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Hebrews 13:17 NIV

\*rule/ rulers KJV in Heb. 13:7,17,24  
Greek = *hegeomai* - the ones leading.

Compare this word with the one in the following verse. It is not the same:

*Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers\*\* of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."*

Mark 10:42 NIV

\*\*rulers NIV to rule KJV

Greek = *archo* - to be chief, to rule

A ruler is in the centre of things. All is happening for him. Nothing happens without his word or his approval. But Jesus followed this with these words:

*"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."*

Mark 10:43-44 NIV

The Lord Jesus no longer uses the word 'rule' in this sentence, but instead the word 'great'. True greatness has not got to do with being first, but a willingness to be last. This kind of greatness is available for all leaders, both men and women. It is especially the kind of leadership necessary for headship by men, both for husbands and for elders.