

Royer: The phrase we often hear in this discussion about mutuality is “The husband is the head of the home.”

Helvig: There is a passage in the Bible that says the “The head of the woman is man.” And a passage that says “The husband is the head of the wife.”

Royer: The key to these passages is understanding the implications of headship.

### What are the implications of headship in the New Testament?

**Payne** In that day, “head” did not convey the connotation of leader in Greek like it does in English or Hebrew. When you look at the standard Greek dictionaries, they support this. For instance, the most exhaustive one, the Dell Scott Jones McKenzie, over 100 years in the making, thousands of scholars participating, they list 48 metaphorical meanings for the word “head”. Not one of them means leader, boss, authority, or anything closely related to them. Not one. But they have a whole bunch related to source.

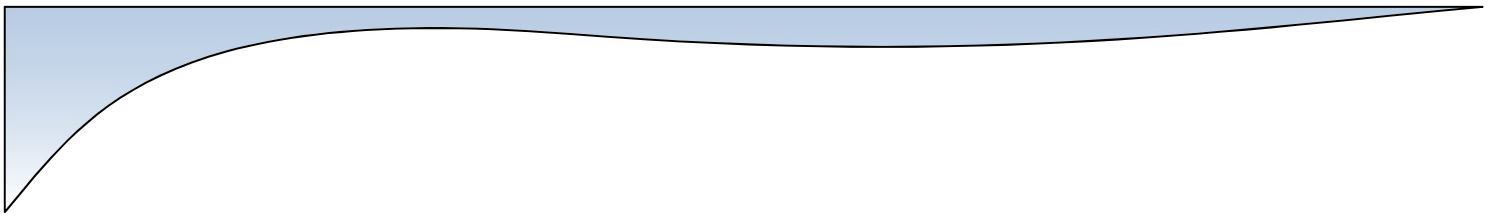
Royer: Let’s look at the passage in 1 Corinthians regarding headship, where Paul is addressing behavior in church meetings. 1 Corinthians 11:3 says

*But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3*

Helvig: One of the foremost scholars on this topic is Dr. Gilbert Bilezekian. We are going to see an excerpt from a Christian conference where he addresses headship. We realize the quality of this film clip is not the same as you have been seeing. However, Dr. Bilezekian explains this passage very well.

### How does headship apply to the church?

**Bilezikian** What’s the plain meaning of this verse? The plain meaning is like so: do you see the step where I am standing? At the top, there are four steps. Who is at the top? Who is at the top here? God. And then down here, second step down? Jesus. And then, under Jesus, who’s here, third? Man. And then way on the bottom down here, looking up? Woman. That’s right. Why? Because head means boss, authority. That’s what it means in the English language, that’s what it must mean in the Greek (laugh).



I claim that Greek is one of those languages where head does not mean authority. If it were, if it did mean that, look at what we would get. There would exist the same relation between God and Christ, look at the heresy, as there exists between Christ and man. Christ, who is equal with God, who is the form of God, through whom all things have been made, who is the origin of all things and the destination of all things. He would be in relation to man, men would be in relation to Christ, the same way as Christ would be to God. I cannot think of a greater heresy that is now threatening to infiltrate the Christian church because of this attempt to show that there is a hierarchy within the divinity, therefore, there must be a hierarchy among humans, male and female.

Now, when head is understood as source, source of life, now this makes sense. In the epistle to the Corinthians, we are told that in Christ and through him (how does he say it?) Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6). He's the Creator. And the first being that he created in his images was man. In that sense, Christ is the head of man, the source of his life. Then, where does woman come from, in the Genesis story? Comes from man. Man is the source of woman's life. In fact, the apostle Paul, (1 Corinthians) chapter 11, he says that, verse 8, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. OK, and then Christ. And he is referring here to the Christ of the incarnation, to the Christmas story. Who is the father of Christ? God. God is the head, the source of his life. Now it makes sense. The designation of head, understood in this matter. This gives sense to the order of the sequence of those three categories.

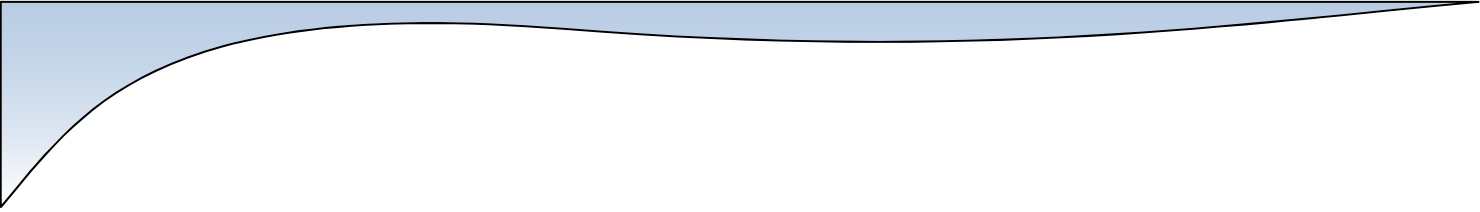
**Johnson** The king of interpretation is context. You have to look at the context and understand what that context is.

Let's say 1 Corinthians 11. One of the issues here is that there is some kind of issue going on in the church meetings that has to do with women prophesying. By the way, the word prophesying there in 1 Corinthians 11 is often overlooked sometimes. It means preaching. That's what preaching is. It's bringing the Scripture out and their significance, which is one of the elements in prophesying in the first century. So, women were getting up in the congregation and were prophesying. Paul never put them down for that. He never said you can't do that.

Paul wants the women to continue to preach. He never forbids them there. He only wants them to have a proper head covering or their hair coiffured in a way that identifies them as women and that the men are identified as men.

Helvig: Next we need to look at the second time headship appears in the New Testament, this time relating to marriage. Ephesians 5:1-2, and verse 23

*Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Ephesians 5:1-2, 23*



Royer: Does this passage mean the husbands are supposed to make the final decisions and be the spiritual leaders of the home? We are going to see another classic film clip from a Christian conference featuring Dr. Gordon Fee, one of the foremost scholars of our day.

### What is headship in marriage?

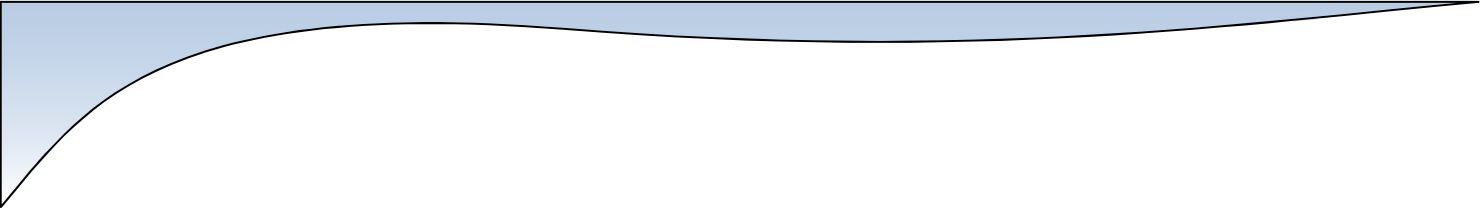
**Fee** I begin with one of the more common abuses of the text. To use it interestingly to tell modern husbands that they should assume their proper role as head of their wives. But since the modern household looks almost nothing like the Greco-Roman household in which those words were spoken, this issue simply has to be given a new cultural setting.

So the modern application is almost always put in terms of “When you reach an impasse in decision making, who has the authority to make the final choice?” You’ve never heard that before? It’s only and always the thing I’m given when I ask this question. It’s the only expression of the ancient household that’s brought in – “Who makes the final choice?” Well, I don’t know if I hear Paul laughing or crying when that utterly modern reading is superimposed on this text.

**Swanson** The teaching that men are to be the spiritual leaders of the home, I mean, that’s pretty predominant in a lot of churches. And certainly God want men to be strong and to be in close relationship with him. But, he wants women to do that too.

If the mom or the woman has a desire for there to be family devotions, and things like that, but she’s told that the man of the home should be leading that, and the man doesn’t lead that, then the woman is left thinking “You’re not a very good husband and you’re not a very good Christian, because you’re not doing what you’re supposed to be doing.” And so, this whole role thing kind of backfires. And I’ve seen a lot of tension in marriages over just that issue. Because when you have these strict roles of what men are supposed to do and what women are supposed to do... I mean very few of us fit in those boxes. And without the freedom to just love people for who they are and how they’re gifted and allow them to exercise those gifts freely, we mess it up.

**Payne** So how do we apply this understanding of head as source rather than leader/authority? Oh it makes a huge difference. Remember my marriage vows? I wanted my wife to obey me? That put me in authority over her. It gave me the power. She didn’t have it. But I’m to be her head in the sense of source of nourishment. In fact, in Ephesians 5, which by the way is the only passage in all of Greek literature and the only passage in the New Testament which refers to the husband being head of the wife. Well, what does he mean by this? And Paul immediately explains the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church. And, gave himself



for her to nourish her, and cherish her. And then he says, so, you husbands should love your wife, should nourish your wife, and cherish your wife. That's what he means by head. Source of nourishment. And that's what I try to do with my wife. And verse 1 of the same chapter calls all believers to follow Christ and give themselves like Christ gave himself.

So, by saying that the husband is the source of nourishment, he's saying that you should respect and love your wives in a deeper way than the culture around you does.

Royer: Lastly, we are going to look at the misuse of headship. Unfortunately, the concept of hierarchy has the potential for abuse of power.

Helvig: This is not to say everyone who affirms hierarchy abuses it, but the potential for misuse needs to be addressed.

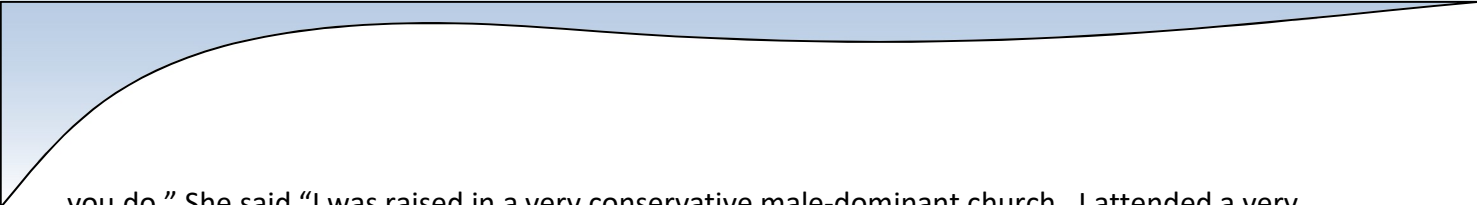
### How has headship been misused?

**Lisa Thompson** We're not choosing rightly. We're not choosing love, we're choosing power. We're not choosing joy, we're choosing power, or kindness or gentleness or self-control or faithfulness. No, we're putting power and hierarchy above all the fruit of the Spirit.

**Morgan** I teach family violence and human trafficking along with the Women Studies program and I do that because I want to connect the dots. I want people to understand that family violence often has roots in women being undervalued, and patriarchal hierarchies that put men in a position where they truly believe that God has given them headship, and that their home is their kingdom, and that everyone in their home, their wife and their children, must do as they say and that they must obey and respect this father. And, to see how that kind of power results in great risk of abuse. I want my students, I want the next generation, to understand that.

**Haddad** Let's talk about specific examples of the damage the male hierarchy position actually presents, specific people, real stories. About 7 or 8 years ago I was invited to debate a well-known complementarian. I never feel those are productive. So I declined the invitation.

Then about 4 years later I got a phone call from this woman. And she said, "I want to talk to you, Mimi. We were scheduled to debate one another awhile back." And let's call her Zoey. And Zoey said "I really want to tell you what's happened to me since. I have left my husband. I have left my church." She said "I really have very little to do with Christianity. But what was going on at my home I think is significant for the work



you do.” She said “I was raised in a very conservative male-dominant church. I attended a very conservative male-dominant youth group where I met my husband. He had to be in control all the time. But, of course I believed that was the teaching of Scripture. We married and we both became leaders in a well-known complementarian church. But what was going on at home was not to be believed. He did and said whatever he wanted. He did things I cannot even tell you about. And I told the pastors in my church and they told me that ‘if you leave him, you are doing great violence to your relationship with Christ because your husband is priest, prophet and king’.”

She said “I finally had to leave. I’m in counseling. I’m doing much better. But I was told that my relationship with Christ was dependent on my submission to a man who was very ill.”

This male authority rhetoric, distortion of Scripture, which I definitely believe it is, but in the wrong hands it is absolutely damaging. We see one case after another of the enormous psychological damage that happens when we ignore the biblical teachings on shared leadership and authority of men and women.

Helvig: So, the Bible says that the husband is the head of his wife. But, according to these scholars that means something much different than authority and decision maker.

Royer: Yes, more like source of life and nourishment.

Helvig: And that encourages a healthy marriage relationship.

Helvig: In session 5 we will continue our study of Scripture and look at specific verses in the New Testament to see if the Bible condemns or condones women teaching and in leadership.