

What about Headship?

From Hierarchy to Equality

Philip B. Payne

This article first appeared in *Mutual by Design* published by CBE International.

In Christ, there is no male-female division (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 11:11). Jesus and Paul teach a radically new way to live together in love and mutual submission, a way that I can testify leads to peace, joy, and maturity for both partners. In contrast, marriages modeled on male headship tend to inhibit the free exchange of ideas between equals that develops maturity in wives and husbands. It is simply not natural in close friendships for one friend always to have the final authority in decision making. How would you feel if your best friend told you that henceforth you would always have to submit to his or her authority? Would it promote the growth of your friendship? Would it promote the maturity of both friends? No, and perhaps that's why both Jesus and Paul affirm close personal relationships of mutual respect and self-giving.

I grew up in a loving Christian home where Dad was the head of the house. But something happened in 1973 that made me examine what Scripture teaches about man and woman. When I was beginning my PhD studies in New Testament at the University of Cambridge, I was shocked to hear a lecturer state: "There is no passage in the New Testament that limits

the ministry of women.” I almost shouted, “That’s not true!” I determined to prove him wrong. But after months examining the New Testament in Greek, I had to admit he was right: the New Testament never clearly limits women’s ministry, but clearly affirms women’s ministry many times.

Even after this discovery, however, I still thought the Bible gave husbands final authority in the home. I insisted that my wife include submission to me in her marriage vows. I thought I was justified in this for two key reasons, both from Ephesians 5. First, Ephesians 5:24 teaches, “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” Second, Ephesians 5:23 says, “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” (NIV). The meaning of these seemed obvious—that a wife must submit to her husband in everything and that a husband is the head with authority over his wife.

Closer investigation of Scripture, however, led me to discover that these passages do not support male leadership in marriage, but teach mutual submission and self-giving in marriage. Part of the problem is the legacy of translations such as the NIV, RSV, NRSV, and ESV, which conceal how Paul defined “head” in verse 23 and incorrectly split the sentence including Ephesians 5:21–24 into two separate paragraphs. Another issue is failing to interpret Scripture as a united whole and instead picking and choosing verses to fit one’s favored view. As we consider together the original language of the

New Testament, we will discover clear affirmations of mutual submission in marriage.

MUTUAL SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE

Before examining the notion of male headship in marriage, let us consider three key scriptural teachings challenging the idea that “wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” First, wives should not submit to their husbands when asked to sin. It is clear from Acts 5:8–10 that Sapphira was dead wrong to agree with her husband Ananias. She was not submitting “as the church submits to Christ,” for Christ would never call us to “lie to the Holy Spirit!” Consequently, “as the church submits to Christ” is a crucial qualifier that frees wives from submitting to anything Christ prohibits.

Second, *mutual* submission is the explicit context of Ephesians 5:21–33. Paul does not give any command here that applies only to husbands or only to wives. Early church fathers also insisted that submission in the body of Christ is truly mutual, applying to all, even bishops.¹ Origen, Jerome, and Chrysostom confirmed that the wife’s submission is one facet of mutual submission.² Mutual submission between husband and wife is both putting themselves at the disposal of the other. It is, according to the most reliable Greek lexicon, mutual “voluntary yielding in love” (BDAG 1042).

The context for Ephesians 5:23 starts at verse 18, where Paul commands all believers, “be filled with the Holy Spirit.” He

describes how to live a Spirit-filled life with a series of parallel commands in one long Greek sentence. The last command is found in verses 21-22: “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord, for”

The earliest Greek manuscripts show no verb “submit” in verse 22.³ So, even though verse 22 is often translated as “Wives, submit to your husbands ...” in reality, the verb “submit” is only found in verse 21. This shows that verse 22 is linked to and applies verse 21’s direction to submit to “one another out of reverence to Christ.”

Third, the Bible affirms the equal rights and obligations of man and woman in marriage. Paul’s longest and most detailed treatment of marriage is in 1 Corinthians 7. This passage never implies the husband’s leadership or that husbands and wives should have different roles. It identifies exactly the same rights and responsibilities for wives and husbands regarding twelve different issues about marriage, both natural and spiritual. Symmetrically balanced wordings emphasize the equality of men and women:

7:2 “Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”

7:3 “Let the husband fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.”

7:4 “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, the husband does

not have authority over his own body, but his wife does.”

7:5 “Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent.”

7:10–11 “A wife must not separate⁴ from her husband ... and a husband must not leave his wife.”⁵

7:12–13 “If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not leave her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave him.”

7:14 “For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband.”

7:15 “But if the unbeliever separates ... the believing brother or sister is not bound.”

7:16 “How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”

7:28 “But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.”

7:32, 34b “An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs — how he can please the Lord. . . . An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit.”

7:33–34a, 34c “But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world — how he can please his wife — and his interests are divided. . . . But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world — how she can please her husband.”

The striking egalitarian dynamics of marriage expressed throughout this passage are without parallel in the literature of the ancient world, which viewed marriage as hierarchical.⁶ Bible scholar Richard Hays, observes how revolutionary this was, “Paul offers a paradigm-shattering vision of marriage as a relationship in which the partners are bonded together in submission to one another.”⁷

A fundamental principle for Bible study is to interpret passages in harmony with other passages by the same author. Furthermore, since God is the ultimate author of the original text of Scripture, we need to interpret passages in light of clear teaching throughout the Bible. One should reject any hierarchical interpretation that contradicts the clear teaching of the equal rights and responsibilities of husband and wife affirmed in 1 Corinthians 7.

WHAT DOES PAUL MEAN BY, “A HUSBAND IS HEAD OF HIS WIFE”?

Having demonstrated that Paul does not teach the idea of one-sided submission of the wife to the husband, let us consider male headship in marriage. I had thought, like most English readers, that “the husband is head of his wife” teaches that the husband has a position of authority over his wife and the final say in family decisions. Decades of study of Greek usage of “head” showed me I was wrong about this, too. Practically, as well, I discovered that my assuming headship was often toxic to the health of our marriage. In

contrast, the practice of mutual submission has strengthened our marriage partnership.

My understanding of this passage gradually changed as I examined the structure of its argument and the meaning of its words in Greek. Following is my own translation of Ephesians 5:18–32 closely reflecting its text in the earliest Greek manuscripts. English words with no direct Greek equivalent are in italics.

Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with *the Spirit*, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from *the Spirit*, singing and making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything in *the* name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God *the Father*, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord, for a husband is “head” of *his* wife as also Christ is “head” of the church in the sense that he is savior of the body *through giving himself in love for the body*. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives *should submit* to their husbands in everything.⁸

Husbands, love *your* wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy, cleansing *her* by the washing of water in *accordance with the* divine teachings,”⁹ and to present her to himself as the radiant church, not having stain or

wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but feeds and cherishes it, just as Christ *does* the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave *his* father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, this is also essential: each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife respect her husband.

Paul explains this passage as primarily about Christ and the church in verse 32. Reference to marriage begins in verse 22 as an illustration of submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, and Paul refers in almost every verse to Christ and the church.

“HEADSHIP”

Before going further, let us pause to consider what we mean by “headship.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary* represents typical English usage, and most English dictionaries, by defining “headship” as, “the position or authority of a chief or leader; leadership; command.” Many assume that Ephesians 5 teaches the husband’s headship over his wife, but the word “headship” never occurs anywhere in the Bible.

Since a husband is not physically the “head” of his wife, all scholars agree that “head” here is a metaphor. In English, “leader,” is the most common metaphorical meaning for “head,” as in “head of the company.” Many English readers know the expression “the husband is the head of the family” (which is not in the Bible) and assume that Paul taught that the husband is “head” of the wife in the sense of having authority over her. But is this how Paul’s Greek contemporaries would have understood “head”?

According to Swiss theologian Markus Barth, Ephesians 5:23 is the first known reference to a husband as “‘head of his wife’ [so it] must be understood as original with the author of Ephesians.”¹⁰ If Barth is correct, Paul was coining a fresh metaphor, so we ought to ask what he intended in the context of Ephesians 5 and what established Greek meaning of “head” best fits here. After extensive research, many respected Greek scholars have concluded that “head” here does not imply “headship” in the English sense of “the position or authority of a chief or leader.” In light of Paul’s other teachings about marriage, it is crucial to examine Greek usage of “head” and Paul’s use of “head” elsewhere.

*“HEAD” IN DICTIONARIES OF GREEK USAGE UP TO
THE NEW TESTAMENT*

Greek use of the word “head” is summarized in the most exhaustive Greek dictionary, called “LSJ.”¹¹ LSJ lists forty-eight figurative meanings for “head,” but does not list “leader,” “authority,” or anything related as a meaning for “head.”¹²

Virtually all secular Greek dictionaries covering usage up to the time of the New Testament do not give even one example of the Greek word for head (*kephalē*) that implies authority.¹³ The most exhaustive New Testament dictionary concludes that in secular usage, this word “is not employed for the head of a society. This is first found in the sphere of the Greek Old Testament.”¹⁴

“HEAD” IN THE GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The word for “head” conveys “leader” in the Hebrew Scriptures 171 times.¹⁵ The NASB, a literal English translation, reflects common English metaphorical use of “head” to convey “leader” by translating 115 of these 171 instances “head.”¹⁶ Yet the standard Greek Old Testament used in churches in Paul’s day, known as the LXX, uses the Greek word for “head” (*kephalē*) clearly as a metaphor meaning “leader” only once.¹⁷ The almost complete absence of “head” as a metaphor for “leader” in the LXX demonstrates that the LXX translators, like most Greek dictionaries, did not recognize *kephalē* as a natural metaphor for “leader” in Greek. If it were natural in Greek to convey “leader” using the word “head” as a metaphor, we would expect the LXX to translate most of these 171 instances of the Hebrew word “head” meaning “leader” with “head” (*kephalē*), but they do not, even though they almost always (in 226 of 239 instances) chose *kephalē* to translate this same Hebrew word when it means a physical “head.”

The sharp contrast between the abundant use of “head” as a metaphor for “leader” in Hebrew and English and only

one clear instance in the LXX is especially striking for two reasons. First, it goes against the LXX translators' tendency to translate Hebrew words with the closest Greek equivalent. We know *kephalē* was the closest Greek equivalent from their overwhelming use of *kephalē* to translate this same Hebrew word when it refers to a literal head. Second, it is abundantly well documented in the LXX for "Greek words to extend their range of meaning in an un-Greek way after the Hebrew word they render."¹⁸ The fact that in spite of this tendency, there is only one clear instance where a LXX translator used *kephalē* as a metaphor for "leader" shows that *kephalē* did not naturally convey "leader" in Greek.

This is important since it warns us not to assume that when Paul spoke of Christ as "head" of the church or a husband as "head" of his wife that he meant "leader" or that he was implying an authority structure. In fact, this meaning was so foreign to Greek that even when "head" was the most obvious translation choice for "head" in Hebrew, the LXX translators almost never use "head" as a metaphor¹⁹ for "leader."

To summarize, both secular Greek dictionaries and the standard Greek translation of the Scriptures used by Paul and in the churches give strong evidence that "leader" was not a natural Greek meaning for "head." Only if Paul clearly explained that by "head" he meant "leader" would his readers be likely to recognize that meaning. Consequently, we should be wary lest we read the English meaning "leader" into Paul's uses of "head." Indeed, we

should expect a different meaning than “leader” when Paul uses “head” as a metaphor.

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHAT “HEAD”
MEANS IN EPHESIANS 5:23

Standard principles of interpretation provide three objective grounds to decide what meaning Paul intended by “head” in Ephesians 5:23:

1. The gold standard principle asks, “Did the author define the meaning of this word in this context?” Authors often do this by adding a parallel phrase that substitutes a different word to explain their intended meaning. This is called “apposition.”
2. Is there anything in the literary context in addition to the author’s definition that explains what the word means or conflicts with proposed meanings?
3. How does the author use this word elsewhere, especially in similar contexts?

When these principles are applied to Ephesians 5:23, all three support that “head” means “savior” in the sense of “source of love and nourishment.”

PRINCIPLE 1: PAUL DEFINES “HEAD” AS “SOURCE” IN COLOSSIANS 1:18 AND “SAVIOR” IN EPHESIANS 5:23

Twice Paul defines what he means by *kephalē* by using apposition, a parallel phrase that substitutes a word to

explain what he means by “head.” Colossians 1:18: “he is the head (*kephalē*) of the body, the church, who is the *archē*,” the “origin” (NEB) or “the source of the body’s life” (TEV).²⁰ Verses 20–22 twice explains that Christ became the source of the church by “making peace by the blood of his cross ... in his body of flesh by his death.”

Paul defines “head” in Ephesians 5:23 as “savior” in the sense of “source of love and nourishment”: “For the husband is head of the wife as

Christ [is]	head	of the	church
he	savior	of the	body”

<i>ho Christos</i>	<i>kephalē</i>	<i>tēs</i>	<i>ekklēsias</i>
<i>autos</i>	<i>sōtēr</i>	<i>tou</i>	<i>sōmatos</i> ²¹

Paul goes on to explain what Christ did as savior of the body: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” and “nourishes and cherishes” her. As head, Christ is the church’s savior, its *source* of love and nourishment. Similarly, husbands as “head” are to “love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” and to “nourish and cherish” them “just as Christ does the church”). “Head” is a natural metaphor for “source” since the head is the source through which the body receives nourishment, breath, sight, hearing, smelling, and taste. One can even say that as Christ is the source of life for the

church, the husband, in that culture, was the source of life for his wife since he provided all that was essential for her to live.

The aspect of “head” that this passage develops is a call for husbands to love, give themselves for, nourish, and cherish their wives just as Christ as “head” is the source of all these for the church. This passage does not call husbands to have authority over their wives, but rather “to submit to one another,” a command to the whole church that Paul specifically applies first to wives in verses 22–24 and then to husbands in verses 25–33. The ways Paul commands husbands to submit to their wives are by loving them, giving themselves for them, nourishing them, and cherishing them.

Many Bible versions correctly preserve Paul’s apposition explaining “head” as “savior.”²² It is tragic, however, that many popular English translations conceal this apposition. Some versions insert “and,” which gives the false impression that these are two independent statements (KJV, RSV, ESV). Others add “of which” giving the false impression that the second parallel phrase refers only to the church (NRSV, NIV) rather than explaining the meaning of “head.” A few add punctuation and change the word order, which completely conceals the original parallel structure and apposition (RSV, ESV). Some versions capitalize “Savior” (RSV, ESV), making it seem like a title instead of an explanation of the meaning of “head.”²³

PRINCIPLE 2: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE IN THE CONTEXT THAT EXPLAINS WHAT THE WORD MEANS?

In addition to Paul's explanation that "head" means savior in the sense of source of love and nourishment, "head" also means "source" in the preceding chapter:

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the **head**, that is, Christ. **From him** the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows** and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:15–16 NIV, emphasis added).

Christ is the "head ... from whom ... the body grows" affirms that Christ is the source of the body's growth. "From" implies "source." This passage is an original inspiration. Nowhere does the Old Testament speak of Israel as "members of God's body."²⁴ This prepares the reader to understand "head" as source in chapter 5.

Furthermore, as we saw above, mutual submission is the explicit context of Ephesians 5:21–24. This is incompatible with interpreting "head" as establishing a hierarchy in which only the wife must be submissive to her husband, not vice versa.

PRINCIPLE 3: HOW DOES THE AUTHOR USE THE WORD ELSEWHERE?

"Head" meaning "source" is supported not only in the

preceding chapter (4:15–16) but also in other passages by Paul, including Colossians 2:19, “the head, from²⁵ whom the whole body ... grows.” “Source” makes good sense as the meaning of nine²⁶ of Paul’s eleven metaphorical uses of *kephalē*, whereas not even one instance has been demonstrated to mean “authority over.”²⁷

All three principles clearly support that “head” in Ephesians 5:23 means “savior” in the sense of “source of love and nourishment.” Based on a clear understanding of Paul’s language and intent in Ephesians 5, how does he instruct husbands and wives to live out their marriage relationship as followers of Jesus?

DOES EPHESIANS 5 TEACH THAT CHRIST IS THE MODEL FOR THE HUSBAND ONLY, NOT HIS WIFE?

No. In Ephesians 5:2, Paul commands the whole church, including wives, “walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.” Ephesians 4:13 expresses the goal that we all attain “to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Paul doesn’t ask husbands to do anything more than this.

DOES PAUL COMMAND ONLY THE HUSBAND TO LOVE HIS WIFE, NOT THE REVERSE?

No. Titus 2:4 explicitly calls women “to love their husbands.”

*DOES EPHESIANS 5 TEACH THAT AS CHRIST HAS AUTHORITY OVER THE
CHURCH, A HUSBAND SHOULD HAVE AUTHORITY OVER HIS WIFE?*

Christ has authority over the church, but that is not Paul's point in any of his depictions of Christ as "head" of the church. Whenever Paul refers to Christ as "head of the church" he does this to affirm that Christ is the source of growth, life, love, nourishment, or purity of the church (Ephesians 4:15; 5:23–33; Colossians 1:18–22; 2:19). Analogies always break down when a divine-human relationship is compared to a human-human relationship. Accordingly, Paul concludes in Ephesians 5:32, "This is a profound mystery, but I am speaking about Christ and the church." The key point of the analogy Paul stresses again and again is: "love your wives as Christ loved the church." He never says the husband has authority over his wife, and certainly not that the husband has authority corresponding to the authority Christ has over the church. That would deify husbands! Chrysostom vehemently denies that husbands have authority like Christ.²⁸ If Paul taught male leadership in the home, why does 1 Timothy 5:14 call wives to "rule their homes," literally "be house despots" (*oikodespotein*)?

*DOES EPHESIANS 5 TEACH THAT WIVES MUST SUBMIT TO THEIR
HUSBANDS IN EVERYTHING?*

Ephesians 5:24's implicit command, "wives *should submit* to your husbands in everything" is specifically qualified by and depends for its verb on: "as the church submits to Christ." It is only "as the church submits to Christ" that wives are called

to submit to their husbands. As noted above, God judged Sapphira worthy of death for submitting to her husband Ananias, by agreeing to lie (Acts 5:1–11). First Samuel 25 praises Abigail for not submitting to her husband, Nabal.

*DOES EPHESIANS 5–6 COMMAND SUBMISSION OF WIVES TO HUSBANDS,
CHILDREN TO PARENTS, AND SLAVES TO MASTERS, GIVING THEM ALL AS
EXAMPLES OF SUBMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER?*

Paul’s commands to masters to “do the same to” their slaves in Ephesians 6:9 and “grant justice and equality (or fairness) to your slaves” in Colossians 4:1 may imply mutual submission, but they are grammatically unrelated to “submitting to one another.” Nothing in Paul’s commands to children and fathers implies mutual submission, nor are they grammatically linked to “submitting to one another.” Twelve verses separate the commands to children from “submitting to one another.” Neither the passage about slaves or children contain any form of the word “submit.”

In the original text of Ephesians 5 “submit” occurs only twice: “submitting to one another” and “as the church submits to Christ,” never following the subject “wives.” These instances of “submit” provide the context (mutual submission) and limit submission by wives to their husbands to “as the church submits to Christ.” Some versions incorrectly create a paragraph break between 5:21 and 22, which butchers Paul’s sentence and makes readers think verse 21 introduces the three following pairs.

Mutual submission introduces the wife's submission and sets the stage for Paul's culturally radical commands to husbands to "love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (5:25). Such love entails a husband's submission to his wife and respect for his wife. Accordingly, Paul makes no distinction between the obedience and honor children owe to their father than they owe to their mother in Ephesians 6:1–2. There is no "boss" in a marriage; husband and wife are equals.

Conclusion

On close examination, the New Testament neither requires one-way submission in marriage nor does it give one partner supremacy in making decisions. Paul's most extensive passage about marriage, 1 Corinthians 7, affirms the equal standing of husband and wife in twelve areas.

Paul commands all believers to submit to one another in Ephesians 5:21. The reciprocal pronoun "to one another" demands that the submission is reciprocal, going both ways. It is explicitly in the context of mutual submission that Paul adds to this same sentence, "wives to your own husbands," which depends for its verb on verse 21's "submitting to one another." Verses 22–24 combined with Paul's following commands to husbands—to love, give themselves for, nourish, and cherish their wives—express the reciprocity of mutual submission in marriage. Both husband and wife are to subordinate their desires in deference for the best for the other, putting themselves at the disposal of the other.

Submission is voluntary yielding in love.

Hardly any dictionaries of Greek usage up to the time of the New Testament list any instance where “head” means anything like “leader” or “authority,” but many include “source.” In Ephesians 5:23, Paul defines what he means by “head” as “savior”: “Christ head of the church, he savior of the body.” He then explains that as “head/savior” Christ is the church’s *source* of love and nourishment, just as husbands should be for their wives (5:25, 29). The context of mutual submission conflicts with interpreting “head” to imply that a husband is in authority over his wife. “Head” meaning “source” in Ephesians 4:15–16 supports “head” conveying “source” in 5:23, as does Paul’s usual use of “head” elsewhere. Nine of Paul’s eleven metaphorical uses of “head” (*kephalē*) make sense meaning “source.” Paul’s explanation of a husband being “head” of his wife mentions nothing about his having authority over her, but stresses his self-giving nourishing love for her modeled on Christ, the source of love and nourishment for the church.

Paul consistently affirms the equal standing and mutual submission of wife and husband. Paul does not limit roles based on gender. He encourages husband and wife to relate as equals who put each other’s needs first. His focus is not on who’s in charge but on how best to show love to each other. As Christ gave his life for us, we are to live our lives for one another.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- What does it look like to submit to one another?
- How does rethinking the meaning of head as “source” instead of “leader” change your perspective on this passage?
- What else did you learn from this chapter and how might it impact your marriage?

End Notes

Chapter 7: What about Headship?

1. E.g. Jerome regarding Ephesians 5:21, “Let the bishops hear these words, let the presbyters hear them, let every order of teachers hear them, that they be subjected to those who are subjected to themselves.” PL 26: 654; R. Heine, ed. *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 232. 1 Clement 37:5–38:1, ca. AD 96, states that all members “are united in a

common subjection . . . let each be subject to his neighbor." Polycarp (ca. AD 70–155), To the Philippians 10.2 and Theodoret, *Commentarius in omnes B. Pauli Epistolas*, 2:33, affirm that "we must be subject to one another." Pope John Paul II writes in *Mulieris Dignitatem* ("On the Dignity of Women") n. 24, "in the relationship between husband and wife the 'subjection' is not one-sided but mutual."

2. Jerome cites without criticism the patristic understanding that according to Ephesians 5:21, "husbands are to be subject to their wives according to the duty which is commanded." PL 26: 654; Heine, Origen and Jerome, 232. Origen, (Heine 231–232): "Ephesians 5:21 Being subject, he says, to one another in the fear of Christ. This completely destroys all desire to rule and be first." Chrysostom, Homily XIX on Ephesians, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*, henceforth NPNF1, 13:142, "it were better that both masters and slaves be servants to one another . . . submit yourself; do not simply yield, but submit yourself. Entertain this feeling towards all, as if all were your masters." Cf. Homily X, "'submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ'; – if I charge moreover the wife to fear and reverence her husband, although she is his equal; much more must I so speak to the servant."

3. Including NA28, NA27, UBS5, UBS4, Nestle, Westcott and Hort, Tasker, Souter, Alford, Tischendorf, and Goodrich and Lukaszewski (2003), following ¶46, Codex Vaticanus B, Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 4.8.64), Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Jerome's commentary and assertion that in Greek manuscripts verse 22 never repeats the verb "submit" from verse 21. J. Armitage Robinson cites Jerome's statement: "subditae sint of the Latin 'in Graecis codicibus non habitur'" in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Clarke, n.d.) 301. After "submit" first appears in Codex Sinaiticus ca. AD 350–360, every surviving New Testament manuscript includes "submit" in 5:22. Since none of the thousands of New Testament manuscripts after AD 350 removed it, removal can't reasonably explain why all the earliest manuscripts and citations of this verse omit "submit." Consequently, "submit" must not have been in Paul's original letter. Furthermore, "submit" occurs in some manuscripts after "wives" but in others after "husbands" and in either second ("you") or third person ("they"). Differences like these in word location and grammatical form are typical of later additions. Some translations even put the subject and object in verse 22 into a separate paragraph from their sentence's verb, which is in verse 21. This defies reason and is contrary to the text in all major editions

of the Greek New Testament. Even some prominent advocates of exclusive male leadership, agree that this sentence links the submission of wives to husbands to the principle of mutual submission (George W. Knight III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 165–167 and 492 n. 1; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 139–141.) It is because verses 21–22 are part of the same sentence that Paul did not need to repeat “submit” in verse 22. “Submit” is assumed from verse 21.

4. This symmetry directly parallels Jesus’ statements regarding divorce by a man or a woman recorded in Mark 10:9–12 and uses the same verb (*chōrizō*). This and “not the Lord” in verse 12, confirms that Paul is citing Jesus just as he does in his other explicit citations from Jesus, e.g., 1 Corinthians 9:14; 11:23–25; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.

5. Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1997), 120 states, “there is no difference in the legal or practical effect of the action: the modern distinction between ‘separation’ and ‘divorce’ is not in view here, and Paul’s formulation in verse 13 recognizes the woman’s legal right to divorce her husband—though he is urging Christian women not to exercise it.”

6. Cf. Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (NIBCNT; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 139.

7. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 131.

8. BDAG 783 1.d.β col 2.

9. BDAG 905.

10. Marcus Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 2: 618.

11. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon With a Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 945.

12. Nor do its supplements by E. A. Barber, *Supplement* (1968) 83, R. Renehan, *Greek Lexicographical Notes: A Critical Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones* (Hypomnemata 45; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 120, or P. G. W. Glare with assistance by A. A. Thompson, *Revised Supplement* (1996) 175–176.

13. Including the dictionaries by Moulton and Milligan, Friedrich Preisigke, Pierre Chantraine, S. C. Woodhouse, and thirteen additional

dictionaries Richard S. Cervin cites in “Does Κεφαλή mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *Trinity Journal* 10 NS (1989): 85–112, 86–87.

14. Heinrich Schlier’s article on *kephalē* in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 3:674.

15. The number 171 does not include instances where *kephalē* means “first” in sequence (1 Chronicles 12:9; 23:8, 11, 19, 20; 24:21; 26:10 twice, all translated “first” in the NASB) or “top” spatially (e.g., Judges 16:3 NASB).

16. The reason this number is not higher is that some Hebrew expressions using “head” meaning “leader” are not natural expressions in English, like “head priest,” which the NASB translates “chief priest.”

17. The one clear instance is Isaiah 7:9b, “the head of Samaria is the son of Remalia.” In each of the other alleged instances, the standard LXX text either did not translate “head” *kephalē*, or *kephalē* is not used clearly as a metaphor meaning “leader.” Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt) 2:574 identifies “The head of Damascus is Rasim” as not in the LXX but added to Isaiah 7:8a by Origen in the third century AD, long after Paul. Consequently, it could not influence how Paul or his readers understood “head.” Isaiah 7:8–9 uses *kephalē* twice to mean “capital city,” but cities are not leaders, nor do they have authority. The LXX explains four references to “head-tail” idioms to mean things other than “leader”: “above and below” (Deuteronomy 28:13), “high and low” (Deuteronomy 28:43–44), “great and small” (Isaiah 9:14) or “beginning and end” (Isaiah 19:15). In Isaiah 9:14 LXX “great and small,” replaces the Hebrew, “palm branch and reed.” “Head” must not mean “leader” in Isaiah 9:14 since verse 15 explains the “head” to be “the old man and flatterers” and “the tail” to be “the lying prophets.” Isaiah 9:15 does not translate the Hebrew “head” with *kephalē* but with *archē*, here meaning “beginning.” The old men and flatters are the beginning of those the Lord takes away from Israel along with the lying prophets. In order to preserve the original Hebrew contrast between “head” and “tail,” these four could hardly be translated without *kephalē*. Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephalē* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” Appendix 1 of *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 425–468, 441–442, alleges one other occurrence, 3 Kingdoms (1 Kings) 8:1, apparently unaware that Rahlfs LXX 1:646 identifies it, too, as added by Origen (d. ca. 254). In any event, “heads” in 1 Kings 8:1 means “tops,” not “leaders”: “Solomon assembled all the elders of Israel with all the tops (*kephalas*) of the staffs of the fathers of the sons of Israel lifted up before king Solomon.” The term for staffs

refers to actual staffs even where the staff is a staff of office or scepter (LSJ 1562). Grudem appeals to BDB 641, but the LXX translates all references to “tribe” with a different word, *phulē*. Grudem’s translation “tribes” makes no sense here: “with all the heads of the tribes of the fathers of the sons of Israel lifted up.”

18. Peter Walters, *The Text of the Septuagint: Its Corruptions and Their Emendations*, ed. D. W. Gooding (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), 143.

19. In four more passages the standard LXX translation has *eis kephalēn*. The only English equivalent for *eis kephalēn* that fits these contexts naturally is “as head.” None of the other English equivalents for *eis* BDAG 288–291 lists sounds natural in these passages: “into, in, toward, to, at, until, on, for, throughout, up to, in order to, with respect to, with reference to, by, with, or in the face of.” The four are: Judges 11:11; 2 Kingdoms (= 2 Samuel) 22:44; Psalms 17:44 = 18:44 in Hebrew = 18:43 in English; Lamentations 1:5. In addition to these, three variant reading of “as head” (*eis kephalēn*) meaning “as leader” occur in only one manuscript, Codex Alexandrinus. All three occur in a single ten verse span, Judges 10:18; 11:8, 9. A single scribe almost certainly translated all three of these variants. This scribe chose the most literal translation, perhaps influenced by “as head” in Judges 11:11. These three should not be regarded as part of the LXX text since they are not in the older, more standard, LXX texts. Each of these three verses in Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus (in 10:18; its surviving text goes only to 11:2) has “ruler” (*archonta*) instead of “head” (*kephalē*). Since “head” is the more obvious equivalent for the Hebrew word “head,” “ruler” in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus shows that their texts’ translator(s) regarded “ruler” to be a more appropriate translation than “head” when “head” in Hebrew conveyed “leader.”

“As” (*eis*) in each of these cases translates a letter of the Hebrew alphabet called “lamed” prefixed to “head.” In all four cases, John R. Kohlenberger III, ed. *NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) translates the lamed “as,” cf. BDB 512 II.2 e. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957) 103 identifies *eis* meaning “as, expressing equivalence,” citing passages like Hebrews 1:5 “as a son” and “as a father,” Mark 10:8 “as one flesh,” and Acts 7:53 “as delivered by angels”). Nigel Turner cites *eis* meaning “as like normal Greek *hōs*,” e.g. Matthew 21:46 “as a prophet” in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek. Vol. III Syntax*, ed. James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963) 247. BDAG

290 4.d cites “as a witness” in James 5:3, “as servants” in Hebrews 1:14, and “tongues are as a sign” in 1 Corinthians 14:22. BAG 229–230 4.d. and 8.b. cite “as her own son” in Acts 7:21 and “as a light for the Gentiles” in Acts 13:47.

In light of the inclusion of “as” (*eis*) and all the evidence that “leader” was not a standard meaning of *kephalē*, most Greek readers of the LXX probably understood each of these four references to *eis kephalēn* as a simile “as head,” not a metaphor, “is head.” They would either understand them as comparisons to a literal head or would interpret “head” with a standard Greek meaning for “head” that fits the context, such as “top,” “noblest part,” or “source” (cf. LSJ 945; Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009)123–137, 283–290) of something. The presence of *eis* makes these four passages read far more smoothly for Greek readers who did not naturally associate “head” with “leader.” The English translation of the KJV, ASV and *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with an English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 333, 436, 708, 972 simply omit the preposition in all four of these *eis kephalēn* passages, as do the RSV, NIV, NRSV, and ESV in all but one case, because in English, unlike Greek, “head” by itself usually conveys leader.

20. Paul uses apposition twice here, first to define “the body” as “the church,” and second, to define “the head” as “the source” by identifying “he is the head” with “who is the source.”

21. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 399 identifies this as “emphatic apposition since the grammatical construction of each of the four parts of the parallel expressions matches exactly:

nominative singular subject (Christ = he)

predicate nominative singular noun describing the subject (“savior” explains “head”)

genitive singular article (“of the” = “of the”)

genitive singular noun identifying what Christ saves (“the church” = “the body”).”

22. E.g. the ASV, NASB, CEB, AMP, AMPC, DLNT, NABRE, NET Bible, OJB, TLV, and WEB.

23. Paul never even uses the word “savior” in his earlier letters, Galatians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, and Romans, so it is speculative to interpret “savior” as a title in Ephesians 5. The NIV inserts “the” before “husband,” “head,” and “Savior,” though none of these have an article in the Greek.

24. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:184; Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Meaning and Metaphor in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 147, argues that “head” in 4:15 is a metaphor for “source of the body’s life and growth.”

25. Cf. BDAG 296–297, ἐκ 3, “denoting origin, cause, motive, reason . . . source fr. which someth. flows or comes.”

26. 1 Corinthians 11:3 (3x), 4, 5; Ephesians 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19. See Payne, *Man and Woman*, 115–139, 271–290.

27. The context of Ephesians 1:22 (“far above . . . over”) supports the meaning “top.” “Top” or “crown” also fits the parallel wording in Col 2:10.

28. “And who will endure this?” *Hom. in ep. 1 ad Cor.* 26.3 in NPNF1, 12:150.