

The Biblical View of Headship - Part 1 - Headship in the Trinity

The Biblical View of Headship series overview:

Part 1 — Headship in the Trinity (John 10:29-33)

**Part 2 — Headship in Our Relationship with God as Believers
(Jesus as the Head of the Church)**

Part 3 — Headship in Marriage — Wife (Ephesians 5:22-23)

Part 4 — Headship in Marriage — Husband (Ephesians 5:25-33)

**Part 5 — Headship in Marriage — An Application and a Warning
(Genesis 3:16), and raising children (Ephesians 6:4)**

**Part 6 — Headship in the Church (1 Corinthians 11:2-12, 1
Timothy 2:9-15)**

Memory verse

1 Corinthians 11:3 NKJV

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

“Head” in this context, means; the leader, the chief, the one in charge, or the top person. Headship has everything to do with authority or rank and its corresponding role. It doesn't have anything to do with value or worth or essence or being. It's like the different ranks in the army—the person with the lower rank takes orders from the person with the higher rank, however they all work together towards, and are submitted to the same mission, goal or purpose.

Where there is recognition of, and submission to, these roles, there is order, community, love, relationship, and harmony. We see this in the way Jesus related to the Father.

Part 1 - Headship in the Trinity (John 10:29-33)

Who is greater? Jesus or the Father?

John 10:29 NKJV

My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

John 14:28 NKJV

My Father is greater than I.

Who is the Father greater than? *All, everyone.*

However, it's important to understand *why* Jesus said "**My Father is greater than I**"—it all has to do with submission and relationship. What will become clear as we continue on is that Jesus and the Father are equal in essence or being—they are both God. When Jesus says, "**My Father is greater than I**", it shows there is an authority structure within the Trinity. If I said that "The Father is greater than I", it would be silly, because it's obvious—The Father is God and I'm not. However, when Jesus says it, we begin to see what Biblical, godly submission looks like.

Remember: a text taken out of context is a pretext (a lie or excuse). If we now continue in John chapter 10, we'll see what Jesus said in its context, and how it's so obvious that Jesus was not saying that He was less than the Father in essence or being, but that He was submitted to the Father—He had a lower rank within the Trinity.

John 10:29-33 NkJV

My Father, who has given them to Me, **is greater than all**; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. ³⁰ **I and My Father are one.**"

³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

³³ The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, **make Yourself God.**"

v 30 **I and My Father are one**: what did the Jesus mean when He said "**I and My Father are one**"? Jesus was telling us that He is the same kind of being as the Father—He is God, just like the Father is God. The Jews understood exactly what Jesus was saying— "*For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, **make Yourself God***" (v 33).

Jesus (God the Son), the Holy Spirit (God the Spirit), and the Father (God the Father), are all equal in worth or essence or being. They are all eternal (no beginning or end), omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (everywhere at once), and omniscient (all knowing). In other words, Jesus is just as much God as the Father is God. However, there is a hierarchy of order or authority (ranks) within the Trinity.

Authority or rank
(The Father is like the captain of the team)

Father > Son > Holy Spirit

Being or essence (all are equally God)

Father = Son = Holy Spirit

So why does Jesus say that the Father is greater than He is, and greater than all.

1 Corinthians 11:3 NKJV

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God [the Father].

“Head” in this context, means; the leader, the chief, the one in charge, or the top person. Headship has everything to do with authority or rank and its corresponding role. It doesn’t have anything to do with value or worth or essence or being. It’s like the different ranks in the army—the person with the lower rank takes orders from the person with the higher rank, however they all work together towards the same goal or purpose.

Headship defines our relationships. For example, Jesus relates to the Father as a submissive Son—that’s why He is referred to in the Scriptures as the Son of God. Jesus is not literally a biological son of the Father (He is eternal, uncreated), but He *relates* to the Father as a Son, *demonstrating dependance, obedience, respect and submission*. Even in the trinity there is an authority structure.

Remember: Where there is recognition of, and submission to, these roles, there is order, community, love, relationship, and harmony. We see this in the way Jesus related to the Father.

John 8:26-29 NKJV

For I **say** only what I have heard from the One who **sent Me**, and He is completely truthful.”²⁷ But they still didn’t understand that He was talking about His Father.

²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that **I Am He. I do nothing on My own but say only what the Father taught Me.** ²⁹ And the One who sent Me is with Me—He has not deserted Me. For I always do what pleases Him.”

v 28 **I Am ... I do nothing on My own:** Jesus boldly tells the Jews at the temple that He is the, “I Am”, that He is God (Yahweh or Jehovah—see Exodus 3:14). But then in the very next sentence Jesus then goes on to say that He *only says and does what pleases the Father*, what the *Father* has asked Him to say. Jesus has no problem proclaiming His deity, His equality to the Father in essence and being, *and*, at the same time, fully submitting Himself to the Father’s authority.

v 29 **For I always do what pleases Him:** Here we see the correct motive for service—love. It’s simple. If I love someone, then I will want to please them. Because Jesus loved the Father, He wanted to please Him no matter what the cost to Himself.

John 5:19-20a NKJV

Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do**; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does;

There are four things we can learn from John 5:19-20.

- Jesus is so submissive to the Father, that He doesn’t even do *one* thing for Himself—*everything* He does is for the Father. Jesus’s whole life was devoted to pleasing the Father by obeying Him. Jesus was, is, and will always be, completely, wholeheartedly, totally, and unconditionally submitted to the Father. This must be my goal in life.
- There is close cooperation—the Father and the Son work together—what the Father does, the Son also does in like manner (the same way). I must do what God wants me to do, and do it His way.
- The heart of the Father towards the Son: *phileo* or brotherly love and affection. John 3:35 tells us that, “The Father loves (*agape*) the Son”. *Agape* is a volitional, intentional, predetermined, sacrificial, committed, and unconditional love, which does not depend on feelings. However, the Father also *phileo* loves the Son; He has a close friendship with and great affection towards Jesus (also see Mark 9:7 where the Father says of Jesus, “This is my *beloved* Son”, meaning, “the object of My affections”). The Father not only unconditionally (*agape*) loves Jesus, but has brotherly love (*phileo*) towards Him. This can only happen for us if we are walking in the Spirit.
- There is good teamwork and communication—no secrets (shows Him all things). This is why Jesus spent so much time alone with the Father praying—“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Also see Mark 1:35 which tells us that Jesus got up long before daylight to pray. Prayer (our communication with God) is essential if we are going to enjoy relationship with God. The same is true with our relationships with each other—we must make the time to communicate well.

John 5:30 NKJV

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because **I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

v 30 **I can of Myself do nothing:** Jesus’s power is in complete submission to the Father.

v 30 **I do not seek My own will:** Jesus’ focus is not on what He wants (**My own will**), but what the Father wants (**the will of the Father**). This is another important characteristic of willing submission (my will must be surrendered to God’s will).

Summary and Application: Willing submission as modelled by Jesus in His relationship with His Father

Submission to God means doing whatever His will is, with our motive being that we want to please Him because we love Him.

Literally, Jesus won't do or say anything, unless He first receives directions or instructions from the Father. Jesus *could* do what He wanted, after all, He is God, and has the power to do anything he wants. However, Jesus *chooses not to*; this is the ultimate example of willing submission, which is also called meekness or "power under control". Jesus is meek, He has a servant's heart. Other words that help us to understand what it means to be meek are: humility, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, resignation, gentleness, mildness, softness, peacefulness, docility, modesty, humbleness, unpretentiousness, lowliness, submissiveness, submission, self-effacement, self-abasement, lack of resistance, compliance, obedience, acquiescence, tameness, and deference.

Jesus's only autobiographical statement concerning Himself was that He was *gentle* (**meek**, considerate, mild) and *lowly* (**humble**, of no account, subservient, undistinguished)

Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and **learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus wants us to primarily learn only two things from His example to us: meekness and humility. These are the opposite of pride, selfish ambition, and arrogance. Truly, relationships based on meekness and humility are easy and light, and not a difficult burden caused by the heavy weight of pride and selfish ambition (me wanting things my way).

This quality of willing submission (which requires humility and meekness) is the key or secret to good relationships—it's when both people want the best for each other. When both people are willing to give up what they themselves need, so that they can serve the other person, both people get what they need—freely given to them by the other person. However, when we are proud, and choose to be controlled by our sinful nature, then we inevitably seek and fight for our own way, and usually nobody gets there own way, and even if they do, they still aren't happy.

Willing submission, meekness, and humility is the example that God wants us to follow, both in our relationship with Him as we submit to Him, and also in our relationships with each other as we submit to each other. Of course this is the opposite to our sinful nature, so we must first be filled, controlled, empowered, and submitted to the Holy Spirit. The greatest evidence of a believer being filled or controlled by the Spirit is the love and humility they display towards others.

Ephesians 5:18-21 NKJV

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit**, [the result being that we will be] ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ **submitting to one another in the fear of God.**

v 19, 21 **But be filled with the Spirit ... submitting to one another in the fear of God:** What happens when we try to submit to one another by our own strength? Pride expressing itself in false humility—it stinks and is obvious to all around except the person who is deceived by their deceptive and wicked heart—they are so proud if their “humility”. However, this is not true humility which puts others first, instead they are focused on themselves and their own rights and ambitions, and blind and insensitive to the needs of others.

Another verse that gives us more insight in what it looks like to submit to each other is 1 Peter 5:5-7.

1 Peter 5:5-7 AMP

Likewise, you who are younger and of lesser rank, be subject to the elders (the ministers and spiritual guides of the church)—[giving them due respect and yielding to their counsel]. **Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility [as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance] toward one another.** For God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful)—[and He opposes, frustrates, and defeats them], but gives grace (favour, blessing) to the humble. [Prov. 3:34.]

⁶ Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, ⁷ Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully. [Ps. 55:22.]

v 5 **Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility [as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance] toward one another:** Obviously, the only answer to pride is humility. Only when we humble ourselves by thinking of ourselves as servants can our relationships be free from **pride and arrogance**.

The amplified Bible brings out the meaning here very clearly. We are to think of ourselves as servants; our identity must be that of a servant—the picture being that we dress as a servant. This identification as a servant is common throughout scripture, with apostles Paul and Peter often introducing themselves as bondservants of Christ. Remember, we must be humble before God before we can be humble before each other.

v 6-7 Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God ... Casting the whole of your care on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully: This is why we can so safely and confidently submit ourselves completely to God—because He cares for us and is fully able to protect us. We can make ourselves completely vulnerable to God, knowing that He will both protect and nourish us, and not take advantage of us. Jesus had this same confidence both in the Father’s loving care for Him and in His ability to protect and sustain Him.

Examples of humility and meekness in the life of Jesus

Matthew 26:48-54 NKJV

Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.”⁴⁹ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, “**Friend, why have you come?**”

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.⁵¹ And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

⁵² But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.⁵³ **Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?**⁵⁴ How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”

v **50 Friend, why have you come?**: Here, because of His humility, Jesus is able to demonstrate unbelievable kindness and sensitivity to His betrayer, putting Judas’s needs ahead of His own, by calling him “**friend**”. Without humility, Jesus would have been so angry because what Judas did was so wrong and so hurtful—but because Jesus was humble, He was more concerned about Judas and his needs than about Himself and his own hurt feelings. Jesus was putting into action Philippians 2:3, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*”

v **53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?**: Jesus was so much more powerful than these pitiful soldiers. If one angel could kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (see 2 Kings 19:35), then how quickly could *more* than 12 legions or groups of 6,000 plus angels dispatch this small group of soldiers. Here Jesus showed that He was fully aware that, if it were the Father’s will, He could be delivered from the coming torture and agonising death on the cross, but He displayed meekness (power under control), by willingly submitting Himself to both the will and care of the Father.

Following is a beautiful example of the gentleness that results from meekness and humility. In a vision, the apostle John turns around and sees Jesus in all His glory, power, and majesty.

Revelation 1:17 NKJV

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

Here is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Almighty God, Jesus in all His glory. Yet He is so gentle with John, laying His right hand on John’s shoulder and saying, “Do not be afraid”. Can you hear the same gentle and kind voice speak to John that also spoke to Judas in the garden of gethsemane?

There is no greater example of biblical submission, where Jesus submits Himself to the mission. Jesus makes His needs less important than the mission, which is to glorify God and save mankind. Instead of Jesus seeking what He wants and doing what would please Himself, He instead seeks to only do those things that will please and honour the Father. This beautiful and humble attitude is described in Philippians.

Philippians 2:3-8 NLT

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, ⁸ He humbled Himself in obedience to God [the Father] and died a criminal's death on a cross.

The Holy spirit

The Holy Spirit is God

Acts 5:3-4 NKJV

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart **to lie to the Holy Spirit** and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ... Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**"

The role of the Holy Spirit

John 16:13-15 NLT

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. **He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard.** He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ **He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.** ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

John 14:26 NJKV

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

John 17:8 NKJV

For **I have given to them the words which You have given Me**; and they have received them.

Here we see that the Father gave Jesus the words to speak to us (as recorded in the Bible), and how the role of the Holy Spirit is to remind us of the message given to us from Jesus.

John 15:26 NLT

"But I [Jesus] will send you the Advocate [Helper, Comforter]—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father **and will testify all about me.**

The Holy Spirit is submissive to the Son, who is submissive to the Father. The Son seeks to please the Father, and the Holy Spirit seeks to bring glory to the Son.

Do you see the same pattern here as we saw with Jesus and how He related to the Father? Just like Jesus only said what the Father told Him to speak, so the Holy Spirit only says what Jesus tells Him to speak. The same principle applies to the believer. If I am self-focused, I will talk about myself and want to make myself look good. However, if I am God focused, I will naturally want to talk about God, telling other people just how wonderful Jesus is, and all the amazing things that God has done for me.

This relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus is very important. Whenever a person or church seeks to focus on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, it means that they have missed the point—focus on and look to Jesus. The Holy Spirit's role is to point people to Jesus, and will never bring attention to Himself. The Bible specifically states that the role of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Jesus, to remind people of what Jesus said.

Summary: The Father is the Head of the Son, Who is the Head of the Holy Spirit. This means that Jesus is always submissive to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is always submissive to Jesus (and the Father). They all have different roles, but are all equally God and all have the same worth—they are all the same kind of being—God.