

# The Biblical View of Headship - Part 6 - The Different Roles of Men and Women in the Church

## 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 the same goal or purpose, all being *sub* to the *mission*.

Why is headship important?

*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.*

## Outline:

1. The roles of women in the church
  - A) The older or more spiritually mature women disciple, teach, and nurture the younger or less mature women.
  - B) Women help and serve in the church
  - C) Women are encouraged to pray and prophesy in church (but must recognise the authority of the male leadership of the church and their husbands)
2. The roles of men in the church
  - A) What is the difference between an deacon and an elder?
  - B) What kind of man can be an elder or pastor?
  - C) What kind of man can be a Deacon?
3. The two Scriptural reasons for women submitting to their own husbands and other male leadership in the church
  - A) Adam was formed first
  - B) Eve (the woman) was deceived
4. Difficult and controversial topics and verses
  - A) Head coverings, a visual demonstration of submission in many cultures
  - B) The context of, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak"

## 1. The roles of women in the church

**A) The older or more spiritually mature women disciple, teach, and nurture the younger or less mature women.**

Titus 2:4-5 (NLT)

These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, <sup>5</sup> to live wisely and be pure, to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God.

What are some of the things that the more mature women must teach, train, and encourage the younger women to do?

- Love (be affectionate towards) their husbands and children
- Live wisely, be self-controlled, and moderate
- Dress modestly and be sexually pure
- Work hard and organise the day to day running of the home
- Be good, kind, and generous
- Be submissive to their husbands

If this happens then God will be glorified as the world sees their godly example. There is a great need today for women to study the Bible, even at seminary or Bible college, so that they can effectively teach and disciple the younger or less mature women, and also help their husbands and their children.

Consider just how much more healthy, functional, and biblically literate our families would be if we had this kind of biblical mentoring going on, with the older women helping the younger women with the daunting task of learning how to be a godly wife and a godly mother. If their example doesn't come from godly examples, then the young women will by default do things the world's way.

## **B) Women help and serve in the church**

Romans 16:1-2 (NKJV)

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, <sup>2</sup> that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Why did Paul commend Phoebe? She was recognised as a faithful and willing servant or helper in the church at Cenchrea, and was even sent to help in other churches. She was like a missionary. There have been many women who have been very effective as missionaries, reaching others with the gospel, and serving in the church.

## **C) Women are encouraged to pray and prophesy in church (but must recognise the authority of the male leadership of the church and their husbands)**

1 Corinthians 11:5 (NKJV)

**But every woman who prays or prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonours her head (her husband), for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

Was it normal for women to pray and prophesy in church? Yes. However the context of this verse is very important. We'll come back to this at the end.

Summary: Ways that the Bible says women can serve in the church include:

- Meeting needs in the local church
- Mission work, being a missionary
- Teaching children
- Teaching other women
- Praying and prophesying in the church service (*while submitting to and recognising the headship or leadership position of their husband and the male leadership of the church—see section 4A.*)

## 2. The roles of men in the church

Men have similar roles to women, with the main difference being their leadership position. These roles include:

- Meeting needs in the local church
- Mission work, being a missionary
- Teaching children
- Teaching other men (discipleship, how to be godly husbands etc)
- Praying and prophesying
- Teaching the Bible to the church
- Leadership roles (deacons and elders)

### **A) What is the difference between an deacon and an elder?**

As we go through the Scriptures we will find that there are recognised roles or positions in the church can only be filled by men. Some men are appointed as deacons or servants. Deacons are given responsibility and oversight for the practical or day to day running of the various ministries in the church.

Other men are appointed as elders or pastors. The pastor has the role of teaching the Bible to the whole church for the purpose of equipping. It is the pastor or pastors that have the overall responsibility of leadership in the church.

A Scripture that makes clear this difference in roles between an elder and a deacon is the account in Acts chapter 6.

Acts 6:1-7 NKJV

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, **“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”**

<sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Why this difference in types of ministry, with deacons having more practical roles and elders/bishops/pastors having a more teaching/spiritual role?

Ephesians 4:11-12 NKJV

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.**

Good expository Bible teaching is essential **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (v 12). The saints or true believers must be equipped **“for the work of ministry”** (service), so that the **“body of Christ”** will be **edified** (built up, expanded, strengthened): thus the important and essential role of the pastor/elder/bishop in the church—they must **give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word** (see Acts 6:4).

**“Equipping** also has the idea of “to put right.” This ancient Greek word was used to describe setting broken bones or mending nets. These ministries work together to produce strong, mended, fit Christians.

God’s people do the real **work of ministry**. Leaders in the church have the first responsibility to equip people to serve and to direct their service as God leads.” (David Guzik)

“The primary purpose of the Church isn’t to convert sinners to Christianity, but to *perfect* (complete and mature) the saints for the ministry and edification of the Body.” (Smith)

## **B) What kind of man can be an elder or pastor?**

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV)

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. <sup>2</sup> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; <sup>3</sup> not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; <sup>4</sup> one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence <sup>5</sup> (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); <sup>6</sup> not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. <sup>7</sup> Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NLT)

This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honourable position.” <sup>2</sup> So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. <sup>3</sup> He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. <sup>5</sup> For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?

<sup>6</sup> A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. <sup>7</sup> Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil’s trap.

What are some of the qualifications of a pastor or elder? They must:

- be a man (v 1-7 “he”, “the husband of one wife”)
- live a godly life (no obvious faults to criticise) (v 2)
- be morally pure and faithful to his wife (v 2)
- be self-controlled (v 2)
- be wise (v 2)
- have a good reputation (v 2)
- hospitable (v 2)
- able to gently communicate with others (v 2)
- doesn’t drink too much alcohol and doesn’t use drugs (v 3)
- not violent (v 3)
- not greedy for money (v 3)
- gentle (v 3)
- not argumentative (v 3)

- content with what he has (v 3)
- a good father and husband (v 4-5)
- a mature believer (v 6)
- have a good reputation with unbelievers outside the church (v 7)

### **C) What kind of man can be a Deacon?**

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NKJV)

Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, <sup>9</sup> holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. <sup>10</sup> But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. <sup>11</sup> Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. <sup>13</sup> For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NLT)

In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. <sup>9</sup> They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons.

<sup>11</sup> In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.

<sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. <sup>13</sup> Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

What are some of the qualifications of a deacon or servant? Many of the attributes or qualifications are similar to that of an elder or pastor, however, there are also the following qualifications (These criteria could also be applied to the elder/pastor/bishop):

- They must be honest (v 8)
- Before they are appointed, they must be closely examined to see if they meet the criteria (v 10)
- Their wives must be well respected and not gossipers (v 11)

Unfortunately, there are many in church leadership today who, instead of being appointed to positions of authority based on their godly character, are instead appointed based on their: popularity, ability to entertain, charisma, worldly credentials, ability to please people and make them feel good, and speaking ability. Often, sexual purity and poor doctrine are overlooked, doing much harm to the church in the long run: the church may grow in numbers, but decrease in power and effectiveness because the people are not being equipped and therefore can't serve effectively—they are not growing in their understanding of the Word of God or relationship with God.

### **3. The two Scriptural reasons for women submitting to their own husbands and other male leadership in the church**

The Bible makes it clear that women cannot have positions of spiritual leadership over men in the church because of headship, the different God-given roles and levels of authority/rank given to men and women in the church.

1 Timothy 2:12–14 (NKJV)

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 **For Adam was formed first**, then Eve. 14 **And Adam was not deceived**, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

What reasons does the Bible give for only men having the positions of authority in the church? Firstly, *Adam was formed first*, and secondly, *Eve (the woman) was deceived*. This is so simple, yet so many in the church ignore this simple teaching. The roles of man and woman are not based on culture or any other temporary thing, rather the unchanging facts of the order of creation and a fundamental attribute of the woman exposed at the fall—*Adam was formed first and it was the woman who was deceived*.

### **A) Adam was formed first**

Remember what we have learned concerning marriage; the woman was created by God to be a helper for the man, and therefore it is God's design and plan for marriage that the woman submits to her husband (comes under his authority—as unto the Lord, see Ephesians 5:22).

Similarly, the first reason Paul gives for why men are given the role of leadership in the church is also based on the order of Creation. All throughout Scripture, the firstborn always has the preeminent or higher position. In the case of Adam, the command given in Genesis 2:16-17, "*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*", was not given to Eve, but to Adam—Eve wasn't even created yet.

The implication is that Adam received his authority and command from God, and Eve received hers from Adam—God told Adam what to do, and then gave Adam the responsibility to tell Eve what to do. This is the pattern from the beginning of creation.

### **B) Eve (the woman) was deceived**

God has made men and women different: Because women are created to be generally more emotional and spiritually sensitive than men, they are more likely to be deceived or manipulated. The woman's greater sensitivity is a great advantage in many regards, especially in marriage where it beautifully compliments the man's black and white logical thinking (which can tend to be harsh and insensitive). However, a strong leader needs to act on what they know is right, not what feels right.

"Eve's reasoning faculty was at once overcome by the allegation of jealousy felt by God, an allegation plausible to a nature swayed by emotion rather than by reflection." (White)

**Adam ... the woman:** "St. Paul says *woman* rather than *Eve*, emphasizing the sex rather than the individual, because he desires to give the incident its general application, especially in view of what follows." (White)

There is another aspect to the fall that has to do with the different levels of responsibility given to Adam and Eve. "Both Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, and Eve clearly sinned first. Yet, the Bible never blames Eve for the fall of the human race, but always blames Adam (*through one man sin entered the world*,

Romans 5:12). Adam is responsible because of there was a difference of authority. Adam had an authority Eve did not have; therefore he also had a *responsibility* Eve did not have. Adam failed in his responsibility in a far more significant way than Eve did. As well, Eve was **deceived**, and Adam **was not deceived**. Eve was tricked; but Adam sinned knew exactly what he was doing when he rebelled. This means that though Adam's sin was worse, Eve's ability to be more readily deceived made her more dangerous in a place of authority." (David Guzik)

"Significantly, these reasons are not dependent upon culture. Those who say "Paul was a sexist man in a sexist culture," and discount these words, are simply not reading what the Holy Spirit says in the sacred Scriptures here. (David Guzik)

#### **4. Difficult and controversial topics and verses**

##### **A) Head coverings, a visual demonstration of submission in many cultures**

1 Corinthians 11:3–10 (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. <sup>4</sup> Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. <sup>7</sup> For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man is not from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. <sup>10</sup> For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him? <sup>15</sup> But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

v 3 **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:** This verse lays out the foundational principle of headship or authority, which is based on *voluntary submission*. Jesus willingly submits to the Father. The man willingly submits to Jesus. The woman willingly submits to her husband. Remember, 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.

v 4-5a **Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head [Christ]. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head [her husband]:** This goes back to verse 3—the *head* of every man is Christ, and the *head* of every woman is man (her husband).

We need to consider that the wearing of head coverings was widely practiced in that culture, with all the Greek, Roman, and especially Jewish women wearing veils or head coverings. It was a *public symbol* of being under the protection and authority of another person (their husbands). The same is still true in many cultures today.

Therefore, in that culture, both then or now, for a man to pray in church with his head covered would be seen as him publicly denying or rejecting his God given headship or authority over his wife. Conversely, a woman praying in church without wearing a head covering would communicate that she was rejecting her husband's headship or authority over her. Both of these situations sends the wrong message to the people of that culture, and thus would cause God and the church to be shamed and dishonoured.

“It was a custom, both among the Greeks and Romans, and among the Jews an express law, that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil. This was, and is, a common custom through all the east, and none but public prostitutes go without veils.” (Clarke)

In some cultures today, wearing a hat or some other kind of head covering is a picture of humility and modesty. In the same way, the head covering had an important cultural meaning among the ancient Corinthians.” (David Guzik)

“The use of the word ‘veil,’ ... is an unfortunate one since it tends to call to mind the full veil of contemporary Moslem cultures, which covers everything but the eyes. This is unknown in antiquity, at least from the evidence of paintings and sculpture.” (Fee)

In summary, women are encouraged to pray and prophesy in church, so long as they demonstrate that they are under the authority of the male leadership of the church. We'll find out how this works in today's western church as we go through the rest of these verses.

v 5-6 **But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head [her husband], for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if [or since] it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered:** In the cultures of that day, the shaving of the woman's head meant different things, but all were shameful (**but if [or since] it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved**). For example, a Jewish woman would have her head shaved if she was an adulterer (see Numbers 5:11-31), and in the Greek culture, a woman who shaved her head was usually a prostitute or a lesbian.

So we see that the shaving of a woman's head in that culture represented shame. Paul also says that it is shameful for the woman to pray without her head being covered because she is publicly rejecting her husband's authority or headship over her. Paul's point here is that for a woman (in that culture) to not wear a head covering is shameful, just as shameful as having her head shaved, therefore she should wear a head covering (**But if [or since] it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered**).

v 7-9 **For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man is not from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man:** Here Paul reiterates the fundamental reason for male headship, both in marriage and in the church—the order of creation (**For man is not from woman, but woman from man**), and the purpose of creation (**Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man**—created to be his helper, see Genesis 2:18).

v 10 **For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head,:** In that culture, women visibly demonstrated submission to their husbands by having a **symbol of authority on her head**.



v 10 **Because of the angels:** Isn't it wonderful to realise that we have an angelic audience as we gather together to worship God. God wants everything done in order, and the main point here is that it should be easy to distinguish males from females. We'll see this as we go on.

v 11-12 **Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.** <sup>12</sup> **For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God:** Here we see interdependence and equality of being. Yes, men and women have different roles, but they are equal in worth, essence or being. It's important for men and women to realise that they need each other: this understanding causes them to value each other.

v 13-15 **Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?** <sup>14</sup> **Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him?** <sup>15</sup> **But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering:** "From as long as we have known, women have generally worn their hair longer than men have. In some cultures and at some times, men have worn their hair longer than other times, but no matter how long men have worn their hair women in general have always worn their hair longer." (David Guzik)

*Is it a sin for a man to have long hair?* "Based on this verse, many people have thought that it is a sin for a man to wear long hair, or at least hair that is considered long by the culture. But long hair in itself can be no sin; after all, Paul apparently had long hair for a time in Corinth as a part of a vow (Acts 18:18). But, the vow would not have meant anything if long hair was the norm; that's what Paul is getting at." (David Guzik)

v 15 **But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering:** As the veil is a covering, so is the woman's longer hair. "If nature has given women long hair as a covering, that in itself points to the woman's need to be covered (according to the ancient Corinthian custom)." (David Guzik)

v 16 **But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God:** This is where we can relate this whole "public demonstration of authority" to our western culture. In western culture, women don't wear head coverings, and therefore western culture doesn't understand the significance of head coverings. This shows the importance of understanding the culture that we are living in. If we go to another culture, especially an eastern culture, then it would be wrong for a married woman to not wear a head covering, because that would send the wrong message to the people there, and bring much shame and dishonour to God.

However, the principle remains. There must be a visible difference between men and women in church. Whether it be the woman having longer hair or the way she dresses, she must be feminine in appearance, and not look like a man. The opposite is true for the man, who must not dress like a woman or have a feminine appearance, because this would be confusing to the angels who are watching.

"Significantly, none of these three reasons are culture-dependent. The order and manner of creation and the presence of angels do not depend on culture. We cannot say, "Paul said this just because of the thinking of the Corinthian culture or the place of women in that culture." The principles are eternal, but the *out-working* of the principles may differ according to culture." (David Guzik)

## **B) The context of, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak"**

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NKJV

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

v 34 **Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak:** This seems to contradict what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11, that women are allowed to pray and prophesy in public. However the context and the specific Greek words used in the original text bring clarity as we will see.

v 35 **If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home:** "In the ancient world, just as in some modern cultures, women and men sat in different groups at church. Among the Christians in Corinth, there seems to have been the problem of women chattering or disrupting the meetings with questions. Paul is saying, "Don't disrupt the meeting. Ask your questions at home." (David Guzik)

"In the Jewish synagogues, men and women sat apart. But if a woman chattered or called out to her husband sitting far off, she would be dealt with severely. The Corinthian church may have adopted the same kind of seating arrangement, but with many women from Gentile backgrounds, they did not know how to conduct themselves at a church meeting. Paul teaches them how." (David Guzik)

"Alan Redpath points out that Paul uses the ancient Greek verb *la/leo*, which means, "to talk, question, argue, profess, or chatter." Redpath says, "It has nothing to do with prophecy or prayer; it is not public speaking as such.'" (David Guzik)

So simply put, using Scripture to interpret Scripture, these verses are not a blanket command that forbids women to speak at all during the church service, rather that they are not to chatter or call out to their husbands during the church service. Again, the overarching principle, "let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40 NKJV).

### **Conclusion**

Firstly, none of the reasons Paul gives for the different roles or levels of authority in both marriage and the church are culture dependant. They may look different in different cultures, but the principle of headship is the same in all cultures—there are just different ways of communicating the same thing.

Secondly, attitude is everything. God's desire is that willing submission begins in the heart, and is not just an external ritual. Wives should willingly submit to their husbands, and women in the church should willingly submit to the male leadership in the church.

Thirdly, the breakdown of headship (the principle of willing submission) in the church has at least two serious and devastating consequences:

- God's name is shamed or dishonoured as God's model for the church (being in submission to Christ) is misrepresented
- There is a flow on effect into the family, where husbands are not taught to lead and wives are not taught to submit—this causes much pain, shame, and dysfunction.