



WATCH TRAINING DAY

Headship – a guide

Where is it?

1 *Corinthians 11:1-3*

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed their on to you.
But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.

See also *Ephesians 5:23* (on husbands and wives)

What does it mean?

- (A) Authority? [Standard interpretation from mediaeval times onwards] cf. “head-teacher”
- (B) Source? [standard modern ‘egalitarian’ view] cf “head of a river”
- (C) Pre-eminence? [A more literal view] cf. “ahead of the rest”

What did it mean for Paul and his readers?

1. Wayne Grudem has written an influential article analysing over 2,300 uses of *kephale* in ancient Greek and concludes that it means ‘authority’ – BUT...
2. ...he acknowledges that in about 2,000 of his cases *kephale* means “the part of your body which sits on your shoulders”...AND...
3. ...since he is a leading campaigner against women in leadership/authority, it seems his conclusion is what one might expect!
 - The use of *kephale* to mean ‘source’ is rare in ancient times, but in *1 Corinthians 11* it might be better taken to mean/imply ‘pre-eminence’ without that implying any ‘authority over’.
 - Tony Thiselton (in his massive and detailed recent commentary) suggests that the word is deliberately ambiguous in Paul’s usage. Thus Paul acknowledges that Roman society was patriarchal (this is the social setting in which the Corinthian Christians lived, whether they liked it or not) but that men and women have a new equality in Christ.

The Debate Today

1. It is not clear exactly what Paul means, so do not build too much on it.
2. Read this text in the light of others – even in Paul – which imply old gender divisions do not apply ‘in Christ’ (*Galatians 3:28* is the classic one).

3. The trajectory of the NT is towards mutuality.
4. Note that ‘headship’ is not a Biblical term. [It’s “head” – i.e. a metaphor]
5. What does/would headship mean in practice anyway? Does it apply outside Church? (If it’s a creation principle it should do!)

Look at this...

Biblical Headship and the Ordination of Women C. Craston (Grove Books)
First Epistle to the Corinthians (NIGTC) A. Thiselton (Paternoster) pp. 800ff.

See the website of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood for an evangelical view that goes for male (only) leadership:

<http://www.cbmw.org/>

and here’s the British branch:

<http://www.cbmw.org.uk/home.htm>

But a different American evangelical view is that of Christians for Biblical Equality:

<http://cbeinternational.org/>

