

# The Doctrine of Headship

## I. Introduction & Definition

- A. Headship is the doctrinal understanding of God's design for functional leadership.
  - 1. Headship does not denote superiority.
  - 2. Headship does not denote independence.
- B. Greek terms. κεφαλή<sup>#2776</sup>: *head, chief, lord*. Used 75x NA27, 432x LXX.
- C. Hebrew terms. רֹאשׁ<sup>#7218</sup> ro'sh: *head, chief, top, beginning*. Used 612x BHS
- D. [English](#) usage: 21 different definitions depending on the context and usage.

## II. Development & Application

- A. God the Father is the Head of Jesus Christ.
  - 1. First Corinthian development (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:21-23; 11:3).
    - a. Headship contains an aspect of ownership (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:21-23). Christ "belongs to" God (the Father).
    - b. Headship is a part of a channel or chain (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:3).
      - 1) Christ is under a head and He Himself is also a head.
      - 2) Men are under a head and also heads over their wives.
  - 2. Gospel of John development (Jn. 5:17-23).
    - a. The Headship of the Father is a function of leadership oriented to the successful achievement of a particular work (Jn. 5:17).
    - b. The Headship of the Father and the co-working of the Son illustrates an equality of interest (work-partnership) in pursuing the successful achievement of a particular work (Jn. 5:18; Mt. 9:37-38; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9; 16:10; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 3:2; 3<sup>rd</sup> Jn. 8).
    - c. The Headship of the Father demonstrates loving instruction and trusting delegation to the One in subjection (Jn. 5:19-20).
    - d. The Headship of the Father highlights His eternal purpose to honor the One in subjection (Jn. 5:23).
  - 3. The Headship of the Father and Subjection of the Son teaches a six-fold outline of Headship that can be summarized by the acronym **W.E.A.L.T.H.**
    - a. **Work**. Headship is a function of leadership necessary for getting any work done. The Head is actively and continuously working.
    - b. **Equality**. Headship recognizes an organic unity and equality with the body. Neither a headless body nor a bodiless head are good things.
    - c. **Achievement**. Headship and subjection are both needed for the achievement of the task at hand.
    - d. **Loving instruction**. Headship is a love application which provides demonstration instruction for the one in subjection.
    - e. **Trust**. Headship is a trust application which delegates work responsibility to the one in subjection.
    - f. **Honor**. Headship honors and promotes the honor of the one in subjection.
- B. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.
  - 1. Christ as Head of the Church provides the functional leadership for a head-body relationship (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
  - 2. Christ as the Head of the Church provides the functional leadership for the growth of the body (Eph. 4:15-16).
  - 3. Christ as the Head of the Church provides the functional leadership for Christian husbands to shepherd their wives (Eph. 5:22-33).
  - 4. Jesus Christ's Headship of the Church features **W.E.A.L.T.H.**
- C. Jesus Christ is the Head of all rule and authority (Col. 2:10); and the Head of all things (Eph. 1:22).
- D. Husbands are the head of their wives.
  - 1. The Headship of the husband in marriage is a function of leadership oriented to the successful achievement of marital work (Gen. 2:15,18,20,23; 3:16).
  - 2. The husband and wife in marriage have an equality of interest in seeing this work done (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:11-12).
  - 3. This work can only be achieved when the husband fulfills his headship function and the wife fulfills her subjection function (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18).
  - 4. The husband performs loving instruction for his wife (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:35).
  - 5. The husband performs trusting delegation to his wife (Prov. 31:10-31).
  - 6. The husband honors his wife (Prov. 31:29; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:7).
  - 7. Husbands' headship features **W.E.A.L.T.H.**

- E. Parents & children operate within a Divine authority structure, but they are not an illustration of headship.
1. Parents have authority over their children (Gen. 2:24; 28:6-9; Dt. 21:18-21).
  2. Children are to be subject to their parents (Lk. 2:51). ὑποτάσσω <sup>#5293</sup>.
    - a. This is the same language as wives to their husbands and the church to Christ (Eph. 5:24).
    - b. The Scriptures do not employ the head & body metaphor to parents & children (Eph. 6:1).
  3. Parents' Biblical authority and the children's subjection is not a headship feature of **W.E.A.L.T.H.**.
    - a. Children were not provided for Adam as help-mates for his work assignment.
    - b. Children do not have an equality of interest in the parents' achievement of purpose. Children are trained up in order to engage in their own achievement of purpose as husbands and wives in their own generation.
    - c. Children do receive loving instruction (Prov. 1:8-9; Eph. 6:4), but they do not receive any trusting delegation of their parent's marital work.
    - d. Parents may choose to honor their children, but children are commanded to honor their parents (Ex. 20:12).
  4. Some **W.E.A.L.T.H.** principles may overlap with parenting principles, but that does not equate parenting to headship.
- F. Masters & slaves, Rulers & nations, Pastors & local churches also operate within Divine authority structures, but they are not illustrations of headship.
1. Slaves, nations, and local churches were not provided to Adam for the successful achievement of his work.
  2. These relationships are not organic bodies and are not Biblically portrayed as head/body metaphors.
  3. These relationships require functional leadership but not headship.
- III. Headless Individuals.
- A. God's grace supplies all our need (Phil. 4:19; Ps. 34:10).
  - B. God's provision is there for the asking (Jas. 1:5). What the Father provides and what the Father withholds is good and perfect (Jas. 1:17; Job 1:21).
  - C. God may test a believer during a time of lack, but in those conditions He becomes the provision for the need (Ps. 68:5; 146:9).
- IV. Summary & Conclusion
- A. 1 Cor. 14:33,40 God is a God of order, not confusion. This is observed in God's nature, God's creation, and God's plan.
  - B. He ordains leadership function for every human institution.
    1. Headship is functional leadership for those relationships that consist of an organic body or unity.
    2. God's nature and plan of order supplies functional leadership in realms other than organic bodies, but that functional leadership is not headship.
  - C. Summary:
    1. The Father and the Son are One (Jn. 10:30). Therefore there is an organic unity that requires headship for functional leadership.
    2. Christ and the Church are One Body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:12-13,20). Therefore there is an organic unity that requires headship for functional leadership.
    3. Husbands and wives are One (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). Therefore there is an organic unity that requires "headship" for functional leadership.
    4. Parents and children are not One. Order demands a functional leadership in a family, but that functional leadership is not "headship." There is no head/body metaphor that applies to parents and children.
    5. Nations are not an organic unity. Order demands a functional leadership in a nation, but that functional leadership is not "headship." There is no head/body metaphor that applies to rulers and nations.
    6. Local churches are not an organic unity—they are a part of the organic unity within Christ and the Church. Order demands a functional leadership in a local church, but that functional leadership is not "headship." There is no head/body metaphor that applies to pastors and local churches.
  - D. Conclusion: Headship is the functional leadership for the most intimate relationships in all existence.
    1. God the Father and God the Son.
    2. Christ and the Church.
    3. Husbands and wives in the Divine Institution of Marriage.