

Ephesians 5:17 – 6:9

^{5:17} So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. ²² Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸ So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body. ³¹ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. ^{6:1} Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. ⁵ Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. ⁹ And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Historical and Cultural Background

- *Speech*: Ephesians can be organized around four verbs: sit, walk, speak, and stand. After reminding us that we are seated in Christ (1:20; 2:6), Paul alternates between commands about walking and speaking: walk (4:1); speak (4:15); walk (4:17); speak (4:25); walk (5:1 – 2); speak (5:4); walk (5:8); speak (5:11 – 12); walk (5:15); speak (5:19ff.).
- *Household Ethical Code*: Aristotle and other Greek philosophers used household codes like this one (e.g. *Politics* 1.2.1 – 2; *Magna Moralia* 1.33.15 – 18; *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.10.4 – 6). However, no Greek code addressed wives, children, and slaves because they were more or less moral non-entities expected to submit outright.
- *Slavery*: Greco-Roman slavery was a complex phenomenon, overlapping with ‘employment’ yet not reducible to it, since it included war captivity, penal servitude, and other non-voluntary causes. Note Paul’s general aversion to it in 1 Corinthians 7:17 – 35. For more information about this, see my fairly extensive analysis of Scripture in *Slavery in the Bible, Slavery Today*, and my analysis of early Christian history in *Abolitionism from the First to Fifteenth Century*. Both are found here: http://nagasawafamily.org/archives_question_church_stories.htm.

Questions

1. What feelings does this section generate in us?
 - a. If all people 'in Jesus' are equally royalty 'in Jesus,' what about relations of power? How do you think those relationships would work?
 - b. The Christian community is pictured as a singing symphony. How does the theme of speech weave its way through the passage as a whole?
 - c. What commonalities do the three relationships have?
2. How does speech run through this section?
 - a. The backdrop is the church as a symphony where all speak praises to God. Concerned about ability to praise God.
 - b. Husband: informed by how Christ speaks to the church
 - c. Fathers: teach and instruct, do not exasperate
 - d. Masters: give up threatening
 - e. Why is this important? The first way people use power is to silence the less powerful. In Christ, the powerful are constrained in how they use their speech.
3. How is Jesus positioned in relation to the relationships?
 - a. Jesus is put inside and within the husband-wife relation
 - b. Jesus is the goal of parenting
 - c. Jesus stands outside and above the master-slave relation. It shows that marriage is meant to be permanent in this life. Slavery is not.
4. What similarities and differences do we see in the three relationships?
 - a. The less powerful person is addressed first, the more powerful person addressed second
 - b. Submit for wives, obey for children and slaves
 - c. Paul quotes the OT for marriage and parenting but not for slavery, even though he could have quoted from Ex.21, Lev.25, or Dt.15 about slavery. He quotes from the creation order in Genesis 2 for marriage and from the Sinai Law in Exodus 20 for parenting in a faith-based context. This suggests that Paul understood marriage and parenting as given in the creation order, and not just cultural. Arguably, he did not quote from the OT on slavery because Hebrew indentured servitude was very different from Greco-Roman slavery.
 - d. This section seems to encompass a Christian household. There are lots of 'non ideal' situations that come up that are not covered here (see 1 Pet.2 – 3 and 1 Cor.7 for that). But if we understand the ideal, we'll know something about how to deal with the imperfect.
5. Husband – Wife
 - a. What are the word pairings?
 - i. Sacrifice – Submit (carried over from v.21 – the word 'submit' is actually not in the sentence in v.22)
 - ii. Head – Body
 - iii. Christ – Church
 - iv. Respect – Love
 - v. Jesus & church = Adam & Eve; co-rulers of the new creation
 - b. What does the head-body analogy mean here?
 - i. Culturally, what was the relation between wife and husband like? How is the Christian picture different?
 1. Wives would not have been addressed at all
 2. Wives were considered the property of their husbands (as with children and slaves)
 - ii. Union. Does 'headship' mean 'authority' or 'source'? That question is interesting, and I actually think it means both, but I don't think it answers the basic question. It's not 'what does headship mean in every way?' but 'how is the head-body picture applied to marriage of husband-wife'? (For example: In Ephesians, head-body relation is the relation between what is hidden in the heavens (Christ) and what is revealed on earth (church). But clearly the husband is not 'hidden' in any way.) Head-body means union. No accusations, no separation. Christ speaks to the church for her nourishing.
 1. Illus: Ming and I trying to get to know another single woman. The stakes were high. As a married man, my friendship with this woman could only go so far as Ming's friendship with her. One day, Ming said something that hurt and

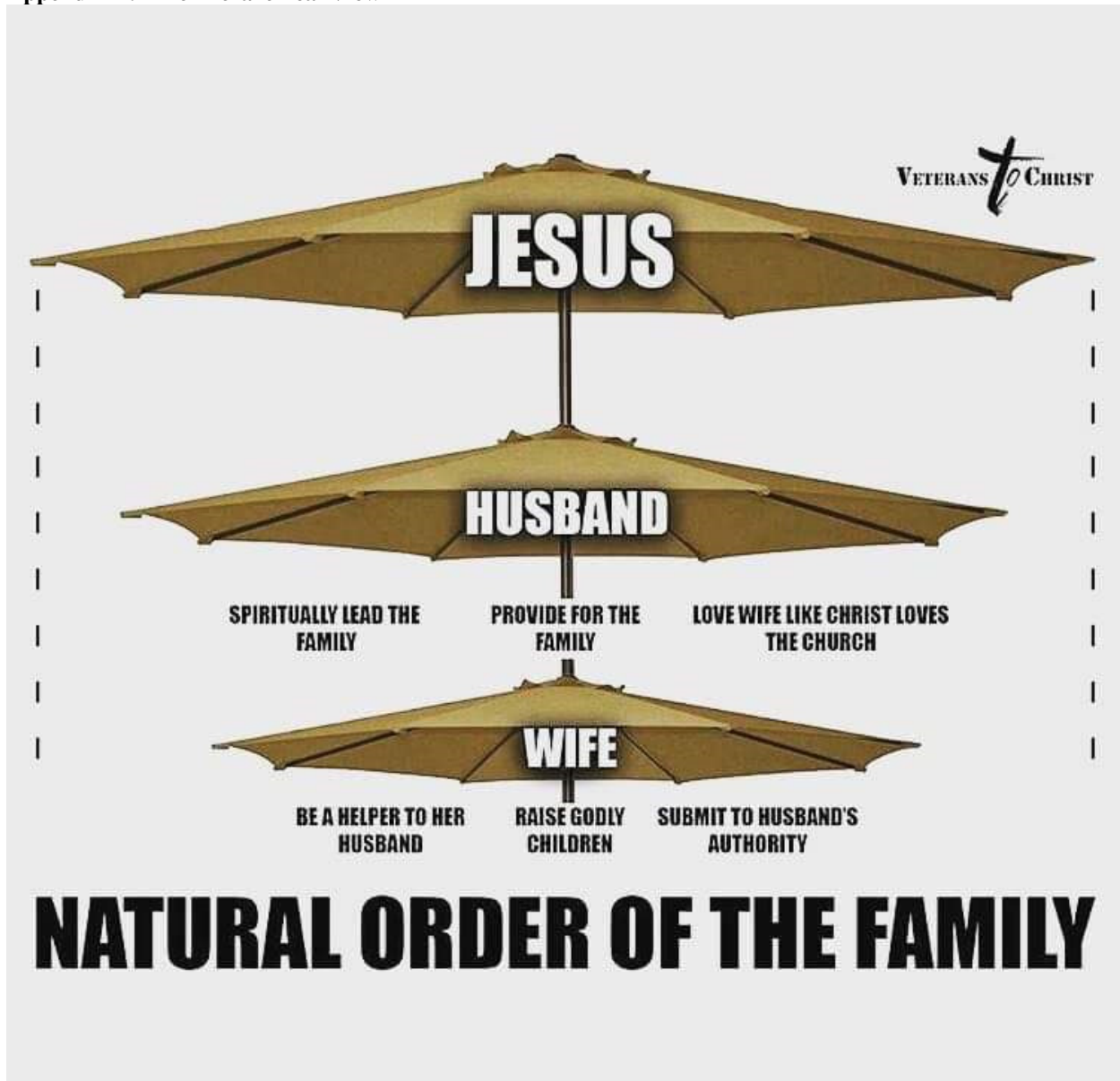
offended this woman. What was I tempted to say? 'Don't you know how this affects me?' That was an approach of me separating myself from her and accusing her. But Christ doesn't speak to the church that way.

2. Guarding the priority of marriage. Marriage relation comes before any other relation.
 - a. Illus: my mom wanted to tell Ming harshly to go back to school and make more money. I told her she could raise that as a question, but if she spoke in that tone, we would leave.
 - b. Illus: Another friend asked Ming to withhold information from me. In this case, it would have impacted how we related to someone significant to us. I went back to him and said, 'I don't think that was appropriate, because she submits to me before she submits to you, just as I submit to her before I submit to others.'
 - c. Illus: I once counseled a friend who had recently gotten married that he was looking for fulfillment and significance in an imbalanced way. He was looking for it in his work. But his wife was really missing his presence at church small groups, as her giftings and passions were more oriented around bringing people together, and leading there, and developing people. Because my friend was not giving enough time and mental and emotional attention to how his wife was gifted, he was starting to see her as the obstacle to something else.
 - d. Elaine Storkey, a theologian in Britain, once said to N.T. Wright that in many cases, the phrase 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life' means in practice is, 'God love you and has a terrible plan for your wife'!! (N.T. Wright told that story in a video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhGqfKWy5E>, 4:40 mark) I think that flies in the face of Paul's teaching here! A husband cannot treat his wife as an obstacle to something else. Jesus does not treat the church as an obstacle.
 3. Illus: I am not 'head of household' on my taxes. I am the head in a head-body union with my wife. My wife is my body. We are not really 'head' of our children either. They are not bound to us in a head-body relationship. This is really important to me as an Asian person. Paul could have just taken Roman patria potestas, the authority of the father over everyone else in his household – wife, children, and servants – and just used the head-body analogy for the father and his entire household. He does no such thing.
- iii. Respect and love: Why finish on this note?
1. They're our weaknesses in giving, respectively.
 - a. Husbands are more apt to say, 'I respect my wife, but I don't love her.' Emotionally withdraw, stand at a distance while making her serve his sexual needs. It's easy for a husband to become the accuser of his wife. The wife has emotional needs that come up at inconvenient times. She is an obstacle, an inconvenience, in the way of something that he's pursuing outside the relationship.
 - b. Wives are more apt to say, 'I love my husband, but I don't respect him.' Manipulate and press in, while making him serve her emotional needs. It's easy for a wife to 'mother' her husband, try to change him, do things for him, and then try to make him do things in the world of men that she feels unable to do herself.
 2. It's what the other person needs proportionally a bit more.
 - a. Men respond to respect – appreciation for competence, being looked up to.
 - b. Women respond to love – affirmation and affection, knowing value she is to him.
- iv. Dating. Illus: Why I didn't want to submit or sacrifice myself for Judy. If you don't want to submit and sacrifice, don't get married!

- c. Illus: John Chrysostom (349 – 407 AD), archbishop of Constantinople, in his 20th sermon on Ephesians, said: ‘You have seen the measure of obedience, hear also the measure of love. Would you have your wife obedient unto you, as the Church is to Christ? Take then yourself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for you to give your life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever—refuse it not. Though you should undergo all this, yet will you not, no, not even then, have done anything like Christ. For thou indeed art doing it for one to whom you are already knit; but He for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way then as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, and spurned, and disdained Him, not by menaces, nor by violence, nor by terror, nor by anything else of the kind, but by his unwearied affection; so also do thou behave yourself toward your wife. Yea, though thou see her looking down upon you, and disdain, and scorning you, yet by your great thoughtfulness for her, by affection, by kindness, you will be able to lay her at your feet. For there is nothing more powerful to sway than these bonds, and especially for husband and wife. A servant, indeed, one will be able, perhaps, to bind down by fear; nay not even him, for he will soon start away and be gone. But the partner of one's life, the mother of one's children, the foundation of one's every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper. For what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband? And what sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Yea, though you should suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this.’ (Homily 20 on Ephesians, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/230120.htm>; note Chrysostom believes that the husband has authority, and has much to say about self-restraint and limits on that authority. He talks about the cleansing and teaching aspect of the husband’s speech in a long paragraph, too.)
- d. Illus for wife: I trust you
6. Parent – Child
- a. (Group) What did you think about this section? What questions do you have?
- b. What does it mean to exasperate children?
- c. Honoring. Is this related to long life? On our end, unless we learn how to honor our parents, we will always suspect authority figures of just being out to get us. We’ll become somewhat neurotic.
- d. Are you children or adults? What’s at stake in that question? Obey vs. honor.
- e. Illus of honoring vs. obeying: Sophomore year, I wanted to think about high school teaching. My parents were upset that they were paying for Stanford. After three months of arguing, I got tired of my own hypocrisy. I offered to leave Stanford just to have the freedom to choose.
- i. Tie back to GREED. We can’t be motivated by GREED. Do not be partakers with other college students in their greed.
- ii. I realized I wanted it both ways. I wanted to obey Jesus and obey my parents and have them absorb the cost when they didn’t agree with Jesus. I needed to honor my parents and obey Jesus even when it meant that I had to absorb the cost when they didn’t agree with Jesus. I would have had to put myself through school.
- f. How do we honor our parents?
7. Master – Slave
- a. What was slavery like back then? More like indentured service. Not racial. Slaves could often run their master’s household or business. They could hold property. They were sometimes educated tutors. But slavery as a system was still very prone to abuse of power.
- i. Slavery in the ancient world was a given (see Orlando Patterson, David Brion Davis). Greece and Rome were first to develop mass-slave societies, however, where slaves were absolutely essential to the leisure class being able to devote energy to theorizing about democracy for free people. It’s a strange irony.
- ii. Note that there is more slavery today than ever before in world history.
- b. Why didn’t Paul just outright abolish slavery? I don’t think it’s because he was afraid of being called too radical, etc.
- i. Abolishing slavery sometimes didn’t always give us the results we hoped for, in the U.S. and in classical Rome when the Germanic tribes sacked Rome. Even freeing slaves in sub-Saharan Africa today leads to re-enslavement by slave traders. There must be a fundamental shift in relationships towards slaves or former slaves.

- ii. How many of your families operate family small businesses? It's a lot of work! Slaves often had more discretionary time and freedom than freedmen, because they didn't have to fend for themselves. Paul factors that in to his guidance in 1 Cor.7 when he says, 'My goal is to secure undistracted devotion to Christ,' and sometimes that's actually better served while remaining a slave. We need to be very careful, because we tend to idealize 'market relationships' and 'wage contracts' as if they were inherently better. They're not!
 - iii. Notice he says to masters 'do the same' as the slaves do to them, i.e. fear, respect, service, etc.! What's it like for masters to absorb economic cost?
 - iv. Christianity did have the effect of lessening and eliminating slavery over time.
 - v. 'Fear and trembling' in 6:5 does not mean slaves groveling. 'Fear and trembling' is a phrase that is used in Philippians 2:13. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you to will and to do His good pleasure.' It probably means 'awe and reverence.'
8. (Pairs) Write up your own Christian code of ethics for other relationships involving power
- a. Landlord – Tenants
 - i. Illus: me, not accusing, provoking, or threatening
 - b. Supervisor – Supervisee
 - i. Illus: Hitch, where Sara Melas' boss encourages her to not print the gossip on Hitch
 - c. Caregiver – Elderly Parent
 - d. Wealthy – Global Poor

Appendix A: The Hierarchical View



How might we understand the diagram above with Paul's logic in 1 Corinthians 6 - 7 when he says in 7:29, "from now on those [husbands] who have wives should be as though they had none," which presumably also means those wives who had husbands should be as though they had none (Greek, like Spanish, is a gendered language, so the male pronoun can often be understood to be the inclusive male pronoun which includes the female). Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6 - 7 is rooted in the conviction that Jesus is the primary owner of our bodies, and we are but the secondary owners (6:18-20). Hence, Paul encourages people to avoid marriage and self-indenture ("slavery") if possible, since giving people some level of authority over one's own body can be an interference with Jesus' authority over our own bodies. But not only that. Paul also encourages indentured/enslaved people to leave slavery (7:21), and (in a move which suggests to me that the diagram above was drawn without much consideration of 1 Cor.6-7), he encourages married Christians to "be as though" they were not. Now in context, I don't think that means that husbands and wives were "free" to be sexually involved with other people (made explicit in 6:12 - 20 and 7:1 - 5). But it is to say that "authority" (which would need to be more carefully defined) does not simply cascade from Jesus through the husband to the wife, as the diagram suggests. 1 Corinthians 6 - 7 indicates that Jesus interrupts and

tempers (at the very least) any kind of human hierarchy in order to assert his lordship directly over people, in principle.

The reason I began by commenting on 1 Corinthians is to point out a long-standing puzzle. Paul sees the lordship of Christ over every person posing a challenge not only to slavery but to Christian marriage, in principle. Pragmatically, he weakens the obligations that husbands and wives have to each other by raising the importance of Christian mission. Mobility for mission (1 Cor.9:1 – 27) and developing and deploying spiritual giftedness (12:1 – 14:40) seem to take high priority in such a way that, in some sense, Christian spouses should ‘be as though they were not’ married. Not only that, but Paul in 1 Corinthians extensively discusses the meaning of ‘headship,’ ‘head-body’ relations, how to understand Adam and Eve’s original relationship in creation, the nature of godly authority, and a woman’s ability to preach in the congregation, as well as the vexing issue of ‘slavery’ and what it means – far more so than in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter. Notably, he affirms the categorical right and importance of women praying and prophesying in the congregation (11:2 – 16), including a wife bearing an authoritative word from God to the congregation while her husband sat in the audience.

Ultimately, this raises the question of how we arrange Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. What is their relation to one another? The diagram seems to take Ephesians and Colossians (and 1 Peter) as ‘exegetically prior’ to 1 Corinthians. If we follow that road, it would be easy to see Jesus reinforcing human hierarchy in marriage, parenting, and slavery (Ephesians 5 – 6 and Colossians 3 – 4) and perhaps beyond. But then, what would we do with 1 Corinthians 7? There, we see Paul/Jesus disrupting and weakening human hierarchy of all kinds, including Christian marriage and, even more so, slavery. So we have to ask, ‘Is Paul strangely contradicting himself?’

Notice that we have to work out the relationship between texts all the time, like between Ephesians and Colossians, the ‘twin letters.’ Paul gives the ‘household code’ in Colossians in an abbreviated and even terse way. But in Ephesians, he gives the code much more depth, qualification, and colorful humane flavor. So anyone preaching from Colossians must take Ephesians into account, if only because Paul is much more sympathetic in Ephesians than he is in Colossians. That’s just one example of working out the relationship between texts.

What if we reverse the typical assumption made about the relationship between Ephesians and 1 Corinthians? There are solid reasons for doing this. First, in 55 AD, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Cor.16:8 – 9). It’s reasonable to assume that the Ephesian believers in all likelihood retained a copy of 1 Corinthians, or at least an awareness of what Paul taught in it. Second, Paul had been in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18), and then went to Ephesus for 3 years (Acts 19 – 20), from which he wrote back to the Corinthians. It is fairly reasonable to think that Paul learned from his experience in Corinth something that he didn’t want to repeat in Ephesus – namely, that the Ephesian believers were vulnerable to the same errors that the Corinthian believers were. So it is reasonable to think that Paul taught the Ephesians in person the topics he had to teach the Corinthians in his first letter. The fact that he stayed twice the amount of time in Ephesus as he did in Corinth gave him ample time to do so. Asia Minor was quickly surpassing Jerusalem as the missional and intellectual center of the broad Christian community, due in part to the personal investments poured there by Peter, Paul, and John. Paul wrote Ephesians and the Colossians from his imprisonment in Rome in 60 – 62 AD a full 5 – 7 years after writing 1 Corinthians. And third, Paul refers to congregational worship practices that are common to every church, by the design of the apostles (1 Cor.11:2, 16). Those practices involve men and women praying for and prophesying to the congregation, in a mode of authority which Paul refers to as a ‘headship.’ Paul says that this is standard Christian practice, including of course in Asia Minor. So, when Paul uses the ‘head-body’ language in Ephesians 5 for marriage, must we not first consider what he said about ‘head-body’ language in 1 Corinthians?

It begins here: ‘Christ is the head of every aner (meaning ‘man,’ which might be inclusive of women, or meaning ‘husband,’ depending on the context), and the aner (husband?) is the head of a gyne (woman or wife), and God is the head of Christ.’ (1 Cor.11:3)

What does the term ‘head’ mean here? The significance of the head seems to be as the organ of speech, as shown when God spoke to Moses who spoke to Aaron who spoke to the people: ‘Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him’ (Ex.4:16). In that sense, God was a ‘head’ (speaker of words) to Moses, and Moses was a ‘head’ (speaker of words) to Aaron. So of course in 1 Corinthians 11:3, God the Father is the ‘head’ of Christ, in the sense of being the invisible supplier of words to the visible Son. In Paul’s usage here, ‘head’ as an analogy drawn from the body is based on the pattern by which God spoke things

into being (Gen.1), and worked by speaking through men and women who then became 'prophets' (Am.3:7). 'Head' in the sense of leadership is also drawn from God's speech-acts through those people. For instance, the 'heads' (leaders) of Israel were to speak in various ways to the people: judge, instruct, and prophecy (Mic.3:9 – 11). Those leaders clearly include women like Miriam (Ex.15ff.), Deborah (Jdg.4 – 5), Isaiah's prophetess wife (Isa.8:3), Huldah (2 Ki.24:14), and Noadiah (Neh.6:14), showing that men did not have a monopoly on leadership in Israel. Would they in the church?

In 1 Cor.11, Paul seems to acknowledge a wider semantic range of meaning for the word 'head.' In his usage, 'head' refers not only to 'authority' of some sort, but also 'source' in some way. Women have to listen to men because Eve listened to Adam when he passed on what he had been told to her: 'For man does not originate from woman but woman from man' (11:8). He reasons explicitly from the creation order in Genesis 2. But at the same time, men have to listen to women because every man was born from a mother and learned from her: 'So also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God' (11:12). That is Paul's view of the creation order as it was designed to be. His view is affirmed by the equal responsibility to instruct that the book of Proverbs gives to fathers and mothers over their children, right at the start of the book: 'Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching' (Prov.1:8). The book of Proverbs portrays its own content as coming equally from father and mother, carrying through all the way to the end, where we find 'King Lemuel's mother' as the inspired author of the content of Scripture (Prov.31:1). In colloquial terms: You have to respect where you came from.

Paul draws this Hebraic framework around his argument for why both men and women have the authority to 'pray' (represent the community to God) and 'prophecy' (preach and teach the word of the Lord) in the congregation. In particular, Paul sees this as reason for men to listen to women as they 'prophecy' in the congregation (11:5). Speaking to God, or speaking the word of God ('pray and prophecy') is to give or offer life to another. It is to mediate life. This issue of giving life by speaking is connected to how God brought things into being 'by' His word (Gen.1:1 – 2:3). It is also connected theologically to the Father making all things 'through' His Word/Son. That is why Paul links speaking to origination or birth. You came 'from' and 'through' others.

'Headship' therefore indicates Christ sharing his authority to communicate God's word with 'man' as male and female ('aner' as inclusive of women), a responsibility which God in creation shared with Adam first and Eve second, but with a view to developing their shared authority in marital oneness. For both had and shared 'dominion' from Genesis 1.

The translational ambiguity of 'aner' and 'gyne' in 1 Corinthians 11 now works in favor of women in church leadership. Paul is surely saying in 11:3b that 'the husband (aner) is the head of a wife (gyne).' Note the singular article and pronoun, by which husband-wife is indicated, as it is unwarranted to say that a single unmarried man is the head of 'a woman' in 11:3b. A single unmarried man is a head of no one, in principle. Then, it is also very significant that he puts no further qualifications on women praying and prophesying. He simply encourages it. In Paul's view, can a dishonored woman like an ex-prostitute, who by Roman law had to wear her hair uncovered and bound without the traditional Roman palla of honorable Roman women, do so with people of honored social and legal backgrounds? Yes, as Paul said that hair was sufficient for a woman's 'covering' (11:15). This was probably the immediate issue which prompted Paul to write 11:2 – 16. But because Paul anchors this conviction with the broadest possible language about gender, it is clear that he intends to be understood more broadly. Hence, can a wife exercise speaking and preaching authority when her husband is sitting in the congregation? Yes. Can a daughter do so with her father? Yes. And that is a *very* underappreciated point, for any culture, especially traditional ones. There is no conflict of interest for a woman to speak the word of God authoritatively. There is no violation of some supposed hierarchy of power, or even cultural decorum.

And it is not a violation of the creation order of Genesis. Rather, this mutuality flows from Genesis, in Paul's referencing of Genesis in 1 Cor.11. It is suggestive of what human community would have been like in God's presence if the fall had never happened. Paul's creation theology and his reading of Genesis are different than the standard complementarian, hierarchical position. When he uses the term 'head,' Paul has in mind a sequence of communication, which must be respected in a confessional sense, yes, as God gave a word to Adam to share with Eve. But this sequence of communication does not take the form of an ongoing hierarchy of power. Rather, it leads to shared authority. For God has authority in His word, and shares it. The human 'head' per se does not have authority over all things, like where to buy groceries, but in the specific stewarding of God's word – its faithful

transmission and reproduction. There was a chronological sequence of communication which we confess as a matter of salvation history, to be sure, but that is different from a present hierarchy of power.

This corroborates Paul's usage of 'head-body' language in Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:22 – 23, Paul says that God made Christ the head over *all things in creation so as to share his positional authority with the church*: 'And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.' In the immediate context, that would include especially the rulers and authorities (Eph.1:21) both in heaven (Eph.3:10; 6:10 – 20) and probably also on earth, as he refers to earthly rulers elsewhere using the same term, 'rulers' of this age (1 Cor.2:6 – 8). The relationship of head and body for Christ and the church is repeated in Col.1:18. Christ as head over all rule and authority is also repeated in Col.2:10, but once again the relationship of head-to-body is not developed in regards to the rulers and authorities. But it is interesting that the use of 'head' here in Ephesians 1:22 – 23 is used for authority, but Jesus' authority is, in this passage, being shared *with* the church, his body.

In Ephesians 4:15 – 16, Paul uses the head-body analogy in a slightly different way: '...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the *head*, even Christ, from whom the whole *body*, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.' It must be noted that the sense of 'head' as 'source' is present in Colossians 2:19, where Paul says, '...the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.' But whereas in Colossians, the body clearly grows *from* the head ('from whom the entire body'), in Ephesians, the body grows *up into* the head. The emphasis here falls on the idea of Christ sharing himself in such a way that believers are 'filling' his body in the sense of the realm in which he is and of which he characterizes.

In Ephesians 5:22 – 33, Paul uses the head-body analogy to pattern the husband-wife relationship to the Christ-church relationship. What matters in how we read the 'head-body' language is not all the possible meanings we could pack into it, but the **specific** meaning and application that Paul draws out of it.

The ideas suggested in the diagram, that a husband's role is to financially 'provide for his family,' while the wife's role is to 'raise godly children,' comes from western culture after the Industrial Revolution. In most other cultures, including the cultures spanning the writing of the Scriptures, husbands and wives both worked in the fields together. That's why Ruth and Boaz met in the field, working. That's why the celebrated woman of Proverbs 31 is a savvy businesswoman who is able to handle all the economic and logistical affairs of the house and the field. And in many other cultures, raising children is also shared. Paul told Ephesian 'fathers' about parenting and personally instructing children in godliness (Eph.6:1 – 4). I take Paul's Greek to be the inclusive male pronoun, and thus 'mothers' are included in 'fathers.' But Paul certainly does not tell Ephesian 'fathers' to delegate their instructional role of parenting to 'mothers.' Nor does Paul single out 'mothers' as being responsible for instructing children. That kind of division of labor is a cultural product of western industrialism, and maybe characteristic of suburban America in the 1950's, the time when Billy Graham founded Christianity Today. It did not exist in the minds of the biblical writers.

In fact, in his context, Paul is **limiting** the scope of the husband's 'headship' from household to wife, in addition to redefining 'head' altogether. The U.S. federal tax form asks us to fill out who is the 'head of the household,' expecting two-parent households to mark the father. But as a husband, I am the head in a head-body union with my wife. I do not share a 'head-body' relation with my children. The U.S. tax form has redefined the word 'head' to mean something different than what it means in biblical usage. It is actually reaching back to the pagan Roman usage, something Paul rejected. For in pagan Roman culture, the Roman father ruled his entire household: wife, children, and servants. If he had wanted to be culturally agreeable, Paul might have deployed the word 'head' for the father over everyone else in his household in a pagan sense. But Paul does not do that at all. He does not accept the Roman legal concept of 'patria potestas,' the absolute authority of the father.

Rather, Paul positions Christ differently in each of the three relationships in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9. The head-body analogy is notably absent from the parent-child relationship (Eph.6:1 – 4), because there comes a time for children to *honor* their parents but *obey* the Lord, and see themselves as too fundamentally distinct from their parents. Parents also need to parent with that end game in mind. The head-body analogy is also absent from the master-slave relationship (Eph.6:5 – 9). For a master to unilaterally 'do the same' things that Paul had instructed servants to do to

masters, and additionally to 'give up threatening' (6:9) means that Paul is dismantling the dynamic of power because Christ is above both parties. So Christ is *within* marriage. Christ is the *end goal* of parenting. And Christ is *above* all other relationships. Thus, the husband-wife relationship is set apart from other types of relationships because of the way Paul is using the 'head-body' image.

So, I would argue that American culture, to the extent that it is reflected in the U.S. tax code, misinterprets Paul's use of the 'head-body' language. To Paul, there is no such thing as a 'head of household' in that sense. And the diagram you posted above, Molly, reflects that misinterpretation. It actually reflects first century pagan Roman culture – a view that Paul rejected.

So what does Paul mean by applying the head-body language to husband-wife? As in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16, which has the most extensive discussion of 'headship,' the primary emphasis falls on speech and shared authority. The three relationships described in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9 involve relations of power where the person in power is limited precisely in his ability to abuse his speech. (1) The husband (5:25 – 33) is not to accuse his wife, thereby separating himself emotionally from her in violation of the head-body unity of marriage; but he is reminded that Jesus washes his bride with his word. That is, Jesus speaks to the church not to condemn her, but to express his unity with her in love and build her up. (2) The father (6:4) is not to exasperate, anger, or embitter his children but to teach them patiently. (3) The master (6:9) is to 'do the same' as the slave in what the slave was commanded (!), i.e. respect, fear, serve with sincerity, and additionally, 'to give up threatening.' One can imagine that any power relationship, not just these three, would follow this pattern. In my case, I am not only a husband and father, but also a landlord, a supervisor, and one day I will be a caretaker of elderly parents. This Ephesians passage is helpful because it assumes that power is a fundamental reality in human relations. Yet in every case, power is subverted for a distinctly Christian purpose, especially but not exclusively regarding how we speak. This is what leads the Christian community into being a community where songs of praise and a symphony of thanksgiving break forth from everyone, the vision of the church that Paul gives in Eph.5:18 – 20 right before talking about these three relationships where power is involved. The church is to be a singing symphony where we all have a part. To be 'filled by the Spirit' as Paul says is to be a community where all speak, not just the powerful.

A woman's responsibility as wife is phrased as follows: 'But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything' (Eph.5:24). This comparison is often understood in an 'idealist' sense, as if Paul should be understood as saying, 'As the church is ideally subject to Christ, regardless of whether the church is in actuality, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands.' But the only way to reconcile and integrate this thought with the rest of Ephesians as well as 1 Corinthians 6 – 7 is to interpret it in an 'actualist' sense. Paul should be understood as saying, 'As the church there is actually subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands.' That is, to the extent that husbands actually follow Christ, so wives ought to follow their husbands. Only the actualist interpretation would provide a woman no conflict of authorities to submit to Jesus' lordship as a wife to her husband. A husband needs to actually be committed to evangelistic mission, hospitality, giving, reconciliation, discipling others, etc. for a wife to not experience a conflict of authorities.

The argument from the whole text of Ephesians supports my view. Paul's previous material in Eph.4:1 – 5:21 strongly suggests that believers need to follow that material first. It concerns Christians developing and using spiritual gifts (4:1 – 16), developing relationship and reconciliation especially between Jew and Gentile (4:17 – 5:6), being available for mission and mobility (5:7 – 14) and being available to disciple and mentor others (4:11, 14 – 16; 5:15 – 21) – all this before we consider Eph.5:22 – 6:9. And that is highly relevant. Those global responsibilities, given by Christ to each of his people, limit and constrain what husbands, fathers, and masters can ask of their wives, children, and servants. Those in power cannot interfere with the responsibilities that are common to all, in Christ. It's all about how we sequence responsibilities.

As in 1 Corinthians 7, Christ's lordship over each person comes first, in principle. And that is why, in 1 Corinthians, slavery and even Christian marriage are placed in check. Paul said this in a context where Roman law gave stiff tax penalties to those couples who did not have three or more children, because imperial policy aimed to keep up the stream of Roman boys to keep the Roman army strong. It is notable that Paul does not encourage Christian couples to have children in 1 Corinthians 7. He does not explicitly discourage them either, although when he says that he 'wants to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord' (7:35) by calling Christian married people to give more energy to ministry outside their marriages, he can be reasonably interpreted to mean that. In any case, Paul is

able to uphold the sanctity of marriage and married sex without reference to children. This again challenges the diagram above.

A wife is still called to obey Jesus even when her husband does not. And thinking through the negative reverse case helps us understand the positive case. Paul considers spouses with different faith commitments in 1 Corinthians 7. For example, if a Christian wife wants to disciple her children to know Jesus while her husband does not – if he is an unbeliever or a ‘pseudo-Christian’ – then she is instructed by Paul to do so anyway: She is to sanctify them (1 Cor.7:14). For Jesus commanded us to cherish and teach children (Mt.18:1 – 18), even if, in that passage, he was speaking of children as a figure of speech for new Christians. His assumption is that parents cherish and teach their biological children. If the Sinai covenant called for instructing Israelite children (Dt.4:11; 31:11), how much more so the new covenant? A woman’s duty as a Christian parent is to raise her children to know Jesus, regardless of whether her husband agrees. And if he chooses to leave, she is to let him (1 Cor.7:15).

Here is another example of different faith commitments: If a husband physically abuses his wife, the wife is to immediately report him to the church authorities. She is to start the intervention process of Matthew 18:15 – 20, because he is in sin, and if the church leaders fail to intervene on her behalf and for her safety, then they are also in sin and not actually being subject to Christ. For in the Sinai covenant, bodily harm, especially towards a vulnerable party, was a serious offense (Exodus 21:15 – 27). The case law includes the following: If a presumably grown child inflicted any kind of bodily harm at all upon his parents (regardless of whether the harm was permanent or not), then he was to be punished by death (Exodus 21:15). If a male neighbor accidentally – in a brawl with a neighbor – struck his neighbor’s pregnant wife in such a way that there was no injury, the husband could still request his neighbor to pay a fine, presumably for mental and emotional hardship; and if there was injury, the husband could request payment up to the limit of proportionality (Exodus 21:22 – 26). If a master inflicted any kind of permanent bodily harm upon a slave/indentured servant, then that servant went free (Exodus 21:26). If this is the kind of stance the Sinai covenant took towards bodily harm, how much more must we in the new covenant take it seriously and protect a vulnerable wife? If a servant could go totally free if his master inflicted any minor but permanent bodily harm, it is likely that physical abuse gains the wife the right to divorce. I for one believe it does. Certainly if church leaders intervene according to Matthew 18:15 – 20 and the husband is still unable to stop his abusive behavior, those church leaders ought to be consider him to be a functional unbeliever.

Hence, no diagram should depict a woman’s vocation, if she is a wife, as completely subsumed under her husband, even in a good, healthy marriage, and especially not in a bad one. Her full vocation as a daughter of God, gifted by the Spirit to be part of the church and Christian mission, is not to be subsumed into her role as a wife. To the extent that we can draw diagrams (which I’m not convinced of), we should probably draw the Jesus umbrella up on top, then draw the man’s umbrella and the woman’s umbrella on equal levels next to each other, with partial overlap reflecting their shared married life together. The partial overlap of marriage can be described by a ‘head-body’ relationship to the extent that the husband in actuality lives faithfully as Christ does.

Sequencing these letters of Paul is important, because it yields different exegetical results than if we consider Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter alone, independently, or ‘prior’ to 1 Corinthians. The Christians of Asia Minor (Ephesus, Colosse, and the recipients of 1 Peter) had an awareness of Christian teaching prior to receiving those letters. What was that awareness? Can we consider 1 Corinthians to be that content of their awareness? There is good reason to do so. If Paul trusted that the Ephesians and Colossians had prior knowledge of teaching on what the ‘head’ signified – where that teaching was more or less the content of 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16 – then we should allow Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16 to set the context for what ‘headship’ means when we read Ephesians and Colossians today. And Paul says that men and women prophesying in an embodied ‘headship’ in front of the congregation was standard Christian practice in worship settings, throughout the early church: ‘Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you... But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.’ (1 Cor.11:2, 16) So this practice came from Jesus and the apostles. ‘Headship’ referred to the one who spoke God’s word with God’s authority, in such a way which embraced and included the receiving listener, empowering the listener to speak that very same content with that very same authority, even to the one who shared it. That is the *presumption* Paul makes when he writes Ephesians and Colossians.

Methodologically, we have to do an exegesis of Paul *as a person* while we simultaneously do exegesis on his writings. Paul even told the Colossians to expect his letter to the Ephesians in Col.4:16 (although there he identifies

it as coming from the Laodiceans, since what we call 'Ephesians' was probably an open letter meant to circulate widely, as 'Ephesians' had no addressee in its oldest manuscripts and did not refer to any specific local church problems). So: Just as we have to treat Ephesians and Colossians simultaneously (at least), and perhaps Ephesians as exegetically 'prior' to Colossians in the 'household code' section, so also we have to treat 1 Corinthians simultaneously (at least), certainly chronologically prior, and even exegetically prior.