

PASSING THE BATON NUMBER 11
Should women wear hats in church?
The role of Women

26th January 2008

Introduction:

My title is meant to be light-hearted, but it has a sombre undertone.

For centuries the church in the West has frowned on women in ministry, declaring that the role of leadership is male, women should not teach men, etc. and even, taken to an extreme, they should wear hats in church - have their heads covered.

I came into Christianity with that one and in some religious circles, regrettably, it is still around today.

Much is made of the necessity of the single female to have a 'covering', is this biblical?

Are these things really what the Bible says about women?

Are we really so unable to hear God, so untrustworthy and so easily deceived that we cannot be placed in positions of responsibility and authority within the church setting?

What about us all being priests and kings?

I am not being provocative, these are questions we must face and ask and search the scriptures for the answers.

Society at large has no problem accepting women in roles of responsibility, Mrs. Thatcher (whatever your personal view may be), the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Nehru - to name but two - both politically and socially women are accepted in roles of both authority and responsibility.

What then, has happened within the church of Jesus Christ?

Over the next couple of months, we will unpick what the Bible has to say about headship, leadership, authority, and submission but for today, we will look at the role of women in society, the home and the church.

We will take an *unbiased* look at what the scriptures really say about the role of women in general, not only in the church setting. I want to look at what submission really means and what our role is in society and in the church.

This is not feminism, this is the *biblical* view.
In fact, feminism per se has some good in it.

Men who have studied church history and the bible very deeply, Roger Price for one, taught that the feminists were not altogether wrong, simply because women have been under-rated for so long; although the way the movement went about establishing their role could have been open to question.

So, keep a very open mind about what I am teaching here, and most importantly, check it out for yourselves.

At the outset I need to say though I *was* a rank feminist before I was saved, I am completely delivered from that now and hold the biblical view of who I am and how God sees me. Precious and honoured in His sight. I recognise that headship is male because the men are **responsible** to God, theirs is the greater **authority**, and I do not find it difficult to submit to Godly male headship or leadership.

I did not say leadership in the church is male per se, and I will explain this as I go on.

Headship and leadership are two different things. Honouring the other sex is a sign that you are fully healed in your own gender and identity. I am not threatened by male leadership or headship, neither am I in competition with them. I honour them in both capacities from my position '**in Christ**'. I know Whose I am, and who I am. "*I'm not where I was, I'm not where I am going to be, but I am on my way*", as Joyce Meyer would say.

I am deeply indebted to those men who have approached the scriptures from a non-chauvinistic mindset. I include in this list Hugh B Black who wrote 'A trumpet call to women' (1988), to Roger DG Price, whose historical input has been invaluable and to David Hilsley, a personal friend and scholar of Hebraic studies, for his paper 'The role of women in the synagogue and in the early church.' Thanks guys, without your input this would never have been possible.

Remember, we always try to approach scriptures from the **Jewish** viewpoint, or we get the wrong interpretation of what is being said. This subject is no different. We will approach it from the point of view of the culture and time at which it was written and to whom it was written, and we will look at how it applies to us.

We will look carefully at what the original words really meant, and therefore what the writer was trying to convey.

We will also examine changes that have occurred historically, bringing us to where we are now in the 21st century. Looking at it from an Hebraic point of view, will show us what God really intended us to hear and see about ourselves and where we fit in the great scheme of things. So, sit back, relax, and enjoy finding out who you really are, your role and your purpose - and men,

this is for your edification and enjoyment too.

God's plan:

Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV and we see God's plan -

*"Then God said "Let Us make **man** in Our image, according to Our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth". So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. Then God blessed them, and God said to them "Be fruitful and multiply: fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth"*

The word '**man**' here is humanity, or mankind as a race, humanity as a whole. This is not speaking of gender. Woman was created *fully equal* to man. She is in no way secondary in terms of her status or anything else. Both the man and the woman are created in the image of God Himself.

I want you to keep this in mind, because when we come to look at biblical submission, which is a related subject, you will see this is a **voluntary** thing, first to Christ as the living head - the 'kephale' as of the head of body, not 'arche' as of ruler - and then to each other, out of mutual affection one for the other. We will be looking at this in our study next month.

Genesis 5:2

"He created them male and female and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created"

So, by God's sovereign will man and woman were created equal, in His image and likeness. The woman has different characteristics and functions from the man - *vive la difference* - but they are both equal.

My right and left hands are totally opposite, but I cannot do without either - they are both equally important to me. Such is the relationship between man and woman. When we marry we are intended to fill each other's gaps - covering the weak areas in the other so that the whole is presented - one complimenting the other, supporting, nourishing and enabling each other.

The first principle is of God's created order:

If we do not understand this the outset, we will not understand what follows regarding the whole issue of the woman's place in society and in the church, and authority and submission generally. This is crucial. We absolutely have to see that it is **God's created order** we must follow.

The basic order of God's creation which was in operation *before the fall* was:

God

Angels

Mankind - all human beings collectively whether male or female, this is a generic term

Animals

Plants and

God gave mankind **rule** over animals and plants.

The principle of authority: the higher the order, the greater the authority:

The principle of authority is related to God's created order. The principle is the higher the order, the greater the authority.

We can see this in relation to, for instance, the Prime Minister, he has the authority, *vested in the office*, to make decisions which affect the whole of the country.

We cannot pop to Downing Street and say, "*I don't think I agree with you doing that*". His is the authority because of the position he holds, particular to the office. The rank is with the office, not the person. The person has earned the right or is qualified to hold the position which gives him/her the authority.

We see this right through society, and it is God given.

Romans 13:1,2

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority, is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves."

This is God's principle of authority being worked out in society, even if we personally do not happen to agree.

Some people in the church today do not honour the fact that God is a God of order and some people, both men and women, have been called to a position carrying more authority than others.

This is the source, the wellspring of so much dissension in the church.

One is people who have *not* been called into office exercising ungodly control over the flock, and the other is those who *have* been called into office who are unable to exercise their God-given authority because the flock will not come under it because they do not recognise it.

It may be that this teaching will fill the gap and bring understanding in order that we can move as God ordained us, under the loving care of Godly headship and leadership.

An understanding of the principles of authority as God created it, is the key to right living.

So, we have the order as created by God. Himself, angels, mankind, animals, plants.

God's original creation:

God planned for a perfect man and perfect woman to found a perfect race and inhabit the earth. In this plan there is no suggestion of one ruling the other. They would both have a perfect relationship with God. They would perfectly fulfil their complementary roles. They were created as spiritual beings to have a relationship with God, but they were also created to have an earthly life.

A life on earth and a life in God were at this stage in no way incompatible. In other words, there was no division between the natural and the spiritual. The division came as soon as sin came into the garden. Prior to the fall they had their own individual spiritual lives and their lives in relation to each other. It is the second of these which affects the woman, when God gives man ruler-ship over her as a result of the fall. In the spiritual sphere there is no such regulation. Ruler-ship then, is entirely in the earthly, natural realm and does **not** relate to the woman's relationship to God, through the Holy Spirit who indwells her.

We need to separate these two, or we will get into deep water when we look at Paul's writings.

Genesis 3:16 and the result of the fall. The first commandment by God to be fruitful and multiply was meant to be a delight, but now it is going to be painful. The last verse says Adam shall rule over Eve. What does this mean? Many people have taken this to be a pattern of what the male and female relationship is supposed to be. This is the **curse** of God on the now corrupted nature. It is not a pattern which God has given for relationships between men and women.

What started out as an intimate, open relationship has now been twisted, distorted, skewed, bent, and corrupted - the *meaning* of iniquity. Adam sinned.

Adam is going to bring forth from the earth by the sweat of his brow - he didn't sweat before, it was easy - Eve is going to have pain and travail in childbirth, she wouldn't have experienced pain before, but now she will. The very thing God has said to them about being fruitful and multiplying will become a source of toil, pain, and difficulty.

For the woman, now, her desire will be for her husband, but he will have 'rule' over her. What is God saying here? He is saying, what you want from your mate is a close, intimate, relationship, but what you will get is a master. What you desire is a lover, but because of the corrupting influence of the fall on Adam, what you will get is a lord, someone who will not understand you

and will tend towards dominion of you.

The fall and earthly government:

History changed the *original* order of creation, and history changed **earthly** authority.

Adam had authority when he was created, over the animals and the plants. He had dominion. But he never had dominion over Eve. When the fall came, as a result of his sin, things changed. Animals and plants were still under him, but they now had the right to rebel, because Adam had rebelled against God. That is how weeds, thistles, thorns, sweat and other things came into existence. That is how sickness, disease and death came in. What also happened was that the man carried the fall genetically, the DNA of the fall is passed on by him, not the woman. Which is why Jesus had to be born of a virgin.

What also happened at the moment of the fall was that because Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned **Genesis 3:13** *the role of men and women* and the order of creation was changed very slightly.

Because Eve was deceived, *God* decreed that man would have the greater authority -

Genesis 3:16.

'...your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you'.

That's new.

It is a direct consequence of the Fall. It is not related to the original plan of God for the man and the woman and we are not told whether this is a punishment on Eve for her sin, or simply a natural consequence of it.

Let's look at it: Hebrew: *mashal* - a primary root meaning 'to rule - one person over another'. The woman's authority was now slightly reduced and the man's authority was increased. Remember, they are now fallen and their communion with God is broken. The order has changed. The women do have some authority, in the natural realm, but the man has the greater.

Now this is what some men want to hear because they think that this gives the man all he needs to boss the women around.

That is not true. Just because he has the greater authority does not mean that the woman is inferior. Male and female are equal in God's sight, equal in status or rank. It is just that the man has the greater authority, and therefore he carries the *responsibility*, or the can, if you like.

The 'buck' stops with him.

Women are not *inferior* to men; they have a different role.

Remember, we are looking at the order of authority, at the **earthly order** of government as ordained by God.

To sum up Adam and Eve had been created equal, but his was the *headship*. Initially there was no division between the spiritual and the natural life and therefore no question of dominion, rulership or submission. But with the entrance of sin by the woman, the *natural* was placed in subjection to the man.

In things **spiritual**, she retained her own identity before God and was not made dependent on man or answerable to him.

Woman's relationship was always direct to God and never through the man.

For both male and female, their ultimate loyalty was to be to God alone.

Put another way, they must put the first commandment first. Loving the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Woman's ultimate loyalty must ever be to God.

The Second Adam:

When Jesus came on the earth His death on the cross and ascension changed the order of things again.

In **Ephesians 1:20-23** we see it -

"He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

These verses show us that Jesus Christ, **the Man**, was raised above the angels and the demons, and because we are **in** Jesus, we too - without gender difference - are positionally seated far above all principalities, rulers and authorities. So the order changed again to:

God

Jesus Christ the Man and the Church corporate - male and female

Angels (including fallen angels)

Unbelievers

Animals

Plants

We notice here a subtle change, we are in Christ, but ***Christ is placed below God***. The significance of this will come clear later in the study, but I want you to hold on to this because it is a fundamental fact that needs to be held when we come to look at the whole issue of headship, authority and covering. And in particular - **1 Corinthians 11:3** and **8-12**.

“Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” and “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”

Men, before you get too excited, every one of you was born of a woman, you couldn't come any other way! We will unpick this whole scripture later on.

The essence of femininity is the capacity to respond:

Having seen God's created order, we need to look at what true femininity is. The essence of femininity is the ***ability or the capacity to respond***.

This is why the church is called the bride of Christ.

Both male and female in the Church are required to be ***responders to God's initiative***.

Therefore, He calls Himself the husband of Israel and the Bridegroom of the Church. It's relational. God, in His relationship to the church, is the initiator, as He was to His chosen people Israel, to whom He was 'husband'. This describes relationship. Our part is only ever, to respond to His initiative.

This is the way it always is, He initiates, we respond, whether male or female, this is the way God does it. When we came into salvation, He drew us, and we responded to that drawing. The way we come in is the way we go on. When we stop being responders and try to be initiators, or innovators, we get ourselves into trouble and lose that intimate relationship with Him.

This is why we are referred to as the Bride.

The whole thing is *relational*, not sexual. The trouble comes when ***we*** initiate and expect Him to respond. You will hear people say, and I have said it myself in the past, *'men you are part of the*

Bride just as we are sons, so get used to it' - I was missing the point here. The issue of the Bride is one of **response** and responding to the Bridegroom, just as the issue of son-ship is maturity, not gender.

We are only sons when we are fully mature.

Male or female, makes no difference, son-ship is maturity.

Greek *huios*, fully mature son. You can remain daughters if you like, but I'm headed for son-ship because that is biblical. He is bringing many **sons** to glory, not daughters, fully mature humankind, able to be trusted with Daddy's cheque book. Everything we experience and the trials we go through are to bring us to the place where He can trust us as we trust Him. Sonship. It is for every member of the body.

What's the point I am making? There is no difference between the sexes as far as God is concerned. He is not gender fixated. To Jesus the whole Bride is one soul and female because she *responds* to Him. One person, male and female, we are the body, and the body is not divided. *'There is no sex in soul'* as La Marechale, General Booth's eldest daughter said. He himself said and I quote *"My best men are women"* work that one out.

We are **equal** in God's sight.

Colossians 3:11

*"...there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but **Christ is all and in all.**"*

It's all about Him and His eternal plan to have a *people* for Himself to show forth His glory.

Woman as gender:

As women, however, we were created to respond, that is the feminine side, we will only find our true identity and completeness in Jesus as our Lord and in God as our creator. Only then can our true and highest self emerge. We cannot hope to find that identity outside of God Himself, who desires that we come into an intimate relationship with Him and see our reflection in His eyes.

Our true identity is found only and exclusively, in the eyes of the One who loves us 100% all the time. He loves us as much on our bad days as on our good days. He is not performance orientated. He does not look on the outward appearance, He looks on the heart, He always speaks to our potential not our faults. It does not depend on us; it is entirely dependent upon Who God is. He loves us because of Who He is, not because of who we are or what we have done or not done. He is the reason He loves us.

Getting the initiator/responder in the right place will solve numerous problems for us. So, if you have been trying to initiate or innovate something *for* God, instead of waiting for His initiative, maybe this day you need to repent - change your mind, have another thought - and get into alignment with Jesus who is your Head.

The biblical view, then, is that woman is a power equal to the man, a mirror image of the man. It could be translated that God created the woman equal to and adequate for the man in every respect.

But we are born and live with, the distortion of the fall. If you ask a man in the world what it means for a woman to be compatible with him, you will get a variety of answers, but basically the answer would be that they are there to meet his needs. This is a self-referential response, an Eros response, we will call it. She is there to meet my needs, to do what I want, to complement me. The woman usually simply wants to find a mate and settle down, this is a God-given drive, but because of the fall, marriages continually fail and break down. Before we are born again, this is the only way we can function too. In Jesus, that is being put right. The 'bent' towards the creature is being straightened. The Eros is being changed into Agape.

Love and marriage:

In contrast to the pagan world, both ancient, and in the time of Jesus, women in the bible, were viewed as persons and partners, not as property, and that is why biblically marriage is viewed as a partnership. It is not a corporation where the husband is the Chief Executive, and the wife is anything from a secretary to a nursemaid. Marriage is a partnership of equal but distinct people who, in love, become *interdependent* - not co-dependent. One does not rule over the other.

So, marriage was designed to be a partnership of two equal and independent people both fully in the image of God, but who in love, become mutually submitted to one another, to the glory of God.

Man and woman then are equal in value, dignity and worth, but remain different in certain qualities, functions, and physiology. The reason I am stressing the point is because it has been so abused in Christianity, which is very largely a male dominated ecclesiastical structure, which has suffered due to its treatment of women in its midst.

What is woman?

Biblically the *qualities* of a woman are portrayed as giving, nurturing, encouraging. She provides love and security in the home. The one who is an 'enabler' would be a good description of a woman. She also has the qualities of leadership as we can see from some of the women detailed in the scriptures. Woman is the one who gives life and nourishment to the child she carries in her womb; she cares for and nurtures it when it is born. She is multifaceted and has the ability to

multitask. She is also an encourager to her husband if he will receive it. Interestingly Wisdom is portrayed as a woman in the scriptures, but I am not going to press that too far.

On the down side, she can be a negative influence on her husband, as is evidenced by the scriptures at least twice showing us what happens when a man *“hearkens to the voice of his wife...”*. The first is Adam, **Genesis 3:17**. *“because thou has hearkened to the voice of thy wife...”*.

The second, is Abram **Genesis 16:2** *“And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai”*. Ladies, we have to be sure that the advice we give to our husbands comes from above, not below. **James 3:17**. We really can be an asset to our husbands, not a liability.

Woman, finding her true identity:

In God’s eyes, a woman is a wondrous creation, someone special, with a unique, God-given nature endued with the ability to respond, relate, nurture encourage and enable, together with a willingness to serve.

As with man, woman was made in the image and likeness of Himself. God made woman to be equal to the man and adequate for him in every respect, as his wife and a mother to his children, but not only that she has the ability to be an initiator and a leader too, as we see from the **Proverbs 31** wife. The Amplified bible has a footnote thus:

“Many daughters have done...nobly and well...but you excel them all.” What a glowing description here recorded of this woman in private life, this *“capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman”*. It means she had done more than -

Miriam, the one who led a nation’s women in praise to God **Exodus 15:20,21**:

Deborah the patriotic military advisor **Judges 4:4-10**:

Ruth, the woman of constancy **Ruth 1:16**.

Hannah, the ideal mother **1 Samuel 1:20; 2:19**:

the Shunammite, the hospitable woman **1 Kings 4:8-10**:

Huldah, the woman who revealed God’s secret message to national leaders **2 Kings 22:14**

Esther, the Queen who risked her life for her people **Esther 4:16**.

In what way did she ‘excel them all’? ***In her spiritual and practical devotion to God which permeated every area and relationship of her life.*** Her secret, which is open to everyone, is the Holy Spirit’s climax to the story, and to this book. In **Proverbs 31:30** it becomes clear that the *“reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord”*, which is *“is the beginning (the chief and choice part) of Wisdom”* **Proverbs 9:10** is put forth as the true foundation for a life which is valued by God and her husband as *“far above rubies or pearls”* **Proverbs 31:10**.

This then, is the key to living the life of a totally fulfilled woman. Whether you are married or single, the prerequisite is a wholehearted, spiritual, and practical devotion to God.

What is man?

Each of us has within us the balance of the masculine and the feminine, and a man without the feminine will never be like Jesus. The world's idea of a full-blooded, male like Rambo, muscle bound, stupid, individualistic, and invincible is not the God given role of a man. The biblical man is strong and knows how to initiate and create order as Jesus did. He is also tender, compassionate, cherishing, and sensitive, in other words, in a sense he has the feminine. A man who is in his strength can also weep without shame as did David, Jesus, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and others.

The essence of masculinity in the Bible, is the God given capacity to initiate, to put things in order, to create, organise, to exercise dominion as God said to Adam. This is why God places man as the head, or the one responsible to Him, because it was **to Adam** that the instruction was given not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, before Eve was created.

Genesis 2:15-18

*“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God **commanded** the man saying “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”. And the Lord God said “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper **comparable** to him”.*

Here we clearly see the headship - Adam is **responsible** to God, for telling Eve what they can and cannot do. The buck stops with Adam! Adam was given dominion, lordship, over the fish, fowl, and earth, he was **not** given dominion – lordship - over his wife. His role was as a *protector* and for that he was answerable to his Creator.

However, at the Fall, as we have already seen, something happened that has profoundly affected the male/female relationship - man was given the ‘rule’ - Hebrew: mashaal - a primary root meaning ‘to rule - one person over another’ - over woman, and her ‘desire was for him,’ hence you get abusive relationships where the wife is beaten but refuses to leave her mate because ‘I love him’. This is a direct result of the fall and the corrupting, distorting influence of what God intended in a marriage partnership. Now, like the earth fighting Adam, marriage will not be a bed of roses either, they will both have to work at it.

The initial, God given desire for dominion, is now out of balance. Adam's drive has changed to one of desire for position, possessions, and power. To look good, feel good and be right. Men usually are always striving for power and control. They are always striving to achieve status in life. They like cars with bigger and faster engines, and louder exhausts. They like a sport where there is violence and domination of one team over another. I am not generalising, I realise that all men are not like this, but the majority of men are, this is the result of the fall, their drive

changed.

Even in Christian circles the man tends to dominate by his accomplishments, and what he has acquired by his status, his income, and his ministry, and sometimes, regrettably even his sexual conquests, all of which indicate the fallen masculine nature.

What is going on in today's church is very seductive to the male fallen nature, finding identity in ministry.

A ministry can become an idol in your life because you look to the ministry for what God should give you. It is particularly prevalent, I believe in the Christian music industry, which appears to differ little from its secular counterpart in terms of the push to get to the top of their profession.

This is not a criticism; it is something which has to be squarely faced and understood if we are to come into all that God has for us. We need to come out of denial about our ambitions, hopes and wishes, to discover whether they are God given, or stem from our old nature which needs the pre-eminence of position, possessions and power.

As we go on in our studies and learn more about the Eros shift in the church, we will see how much of the world is actually in the church rather than the church being in the world.

As typically woman wants to find who she is through her man, or through her children, the man typically is driven to find out who he is and come to a sense of completeness in his life through his accomplishments, his possessions, and his bank account. He wants titles, prestige and power. He is not satisfied with being a worker, he wants to be the president of the company, or better still own it.

This drive for dominion in the male, is manifested in the misinterpretation of many scriptures the male dominated church has taken, and used, to keep women under the authority of men in an unbiblical fashion.

Jesus came to set both men and women free in the power of love - Agape love, not Eros love. But the shift has not yet taken place.

We are yet carnal, the church operates largely in Eros, not Agape, bringing the mindset of the world straight in with the result there are divisions and factions everywhere as leaders continually jockey for position.

*How eager is the man to go,
Whom God has never sent,
How fearful, diffident and slow
His chosen instrument.*

So, as with woman, the Fall has left man needing to find his identity in what he does rather than the who he is. The solution for him as well as for the woman, is first of all a fully restored relationship with his Creator, and then to make his Creator, his Lord. This restores his centre, anything else is like a pot swinging about on the potters wheel, out of balance and misshapen.

The key to man's restoration, too, is Jesus Christ as his centre.

God's intention for the man/woman relationship v the fall:

Prior to the Fall Adam and Eve were equal but the *headship* was vested in the man in the same kind of way that the Father is the head of Christ in the Trinity, although Father and Son are regarded as equal.

The scriptures tell us that Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned. Much is made in some circles of the church of the fact that Eve was deceived, but little of the fact that Adam did not stop his wife from eating of the tree, though he obviously stood right beside her.

The deception of Eve has held women back for centuries in a male dominated church. The couple were equally culpable. She ate, but he stood by watched what happened to her, and then ate.

That is why the scriptures say Eve was deceived, but Adam **sinned**. His was a deliberate action, and subsequently the result of the Fall will be passed down by the male - if you don't know why Jesus had to be born of a virgin, here is your answer. The human male carries the genes of the Fall, therefore Jesus conception had to be, as the Catholics put it, immaculate. It didn't have fallen man involved in it.

When we become Christians, everything changes again. Jesus is the second Adam and in Him everything is restored to its original order, so now we see the model of what headship really means. *"He took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash the disciples feet"* **John 13:4-5**.

The person who would become great, would become a servant.

The headship of the man over the woman now, is to be like that of Jesus. The man loving his wife as Christ loves the church. A headship of loving and caring and serving. The order has changed. Woman is no longer to be ruled over or dominated by man. *That is the new order of things in Christ*. But we have brought our hedonistic, Eros nature over into this new relationship with Jesus and it doesn't change automatically, if at all.

So, everything between husband and wife should be harmony now, but realistically we know that this is not the case. So how should Christians approach the situation when they have a deep difference of which way to go? I quote from a book entitled 'A Trumpet Call to Women' by Hugh Black, this is in the context of decision making/headship within marriage:

“There are, however, (other) situations, not involving contradiction of biblical teaching, in which husband and wife, even after discussion, prayer and consultation with others, remain irreconcilably committed to different courses of action and are not prepared to give way for the sake of the other. There need not be many such cases, but in a fallen world there will be some. In them, the responsibility of the husband to lead and of the wife to respect his initiative requires her to yield to his decision.

The manner in which such situations are handled is crucial. The husband may not be high-handed and stubborn, knowing that she will finally have to give way. That is not the model of Christ’s headship, Neither may the wife be grudging and resentful. That is not the manner of our response to Christ. In the last analysis, when the two can devote no more time to individual and joint seeking of the grace of God to permit them to come to one mind, or to be willing to yield to the other, and exchange along the following lines is in order: Husband ‘Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, nor because I am right (although I do believe I am, or I would not stand firm) but because it is finally my responsibility before God, we will take the course which I believe is right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you’. Wife: ‘Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don’t) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don’t or I would not oppose you) but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honour your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong may He give you grace to acknowledge it and change’.

Such decisions must be made. They can be steps to commitments to God which cement a relationship and assure both partners of the other’s loving commitment. They can alternatively be times which show sinful abuse. The sort of commitment outlined can be used to preserve the dignity and honesty of both partners by setting matters in their proper context.”

An hypothetical conversation but one which proves that both partners must be equally submitted to the Lordship of Jesus for peace and harmony to be maintained within a Christian marriage.

It is not an issue of right and wrong, when Jesus comes He does not come to take sides, but to take over. As the church comes into her rightful position of submission to Jesus only, much of what currently causes strife and division will disappear within everyday relationships and within the church corporate, as we shift slowly from Eros to Agape.

The one-flesh relationship:

This part of the teaching on the role of women would not be complete without including something regarding the place of sexuality within marriage.

In regard to the marriage bed, the Bible and Jewish tradition was literally two thousand years ahead of itself. In Jesus’ day Jewish tradition had a great deal to say about sexuality between a husband the wife, and it has predated much of what we think are new insights into this; for example the rabbis say that this text in **Genesis 3:16** relates to a woman’s sexual desire for her

husband. In Jewish law the theme is always the same when it comes to sexuality. It speaks of a woman's *right* and a man's *duty* to have relations with his wife based on a text in **Exodus 21:10** *'If he takes another wife he shall not diminish her food, clothing and her marriage rights'*.

From this the rabbis derive three fundamental rights for a woman in marriage. If a man was unwilling or unable to provide these three fundamental things, a woman could petition the community for divorce.

Food

Clothing, including shelter, and

Sexual rights

This was taken so seriously that all kinds of regulations were given to protect the woman's rights to have her sexual needs met. Amazingly, this is totally opposite to what our Christian culture has taught.

For the Jews, the man is given extensive prescriptions about what to do and what not to do regarding the act of intercourse. His intent should always be to please his wife. He should never force himself upon his wife, especially if he is argumentative or drunk. It is always done with her co-operation, and done for her enjoyment, that the man delights himself in his wife, and vice versa. Hence Paul says in -

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control".

Paul was a good Jewish boy!

The bible also teaches that a man in his first year of marriage is exempt from military duty so he can stay at home and rejoice in his wife.

I won't go into too much detail here, but there were also prescribed minimum numbers of times that sexual relations should take place based on the man's occupation. If he was a scholar, considered a very arduous occupation, he was obligated to have sexual relations with his wife less frequently than a manual worker, but at least once a week. A manual worker was expected to perform more frequently. Passion within the marriage is God given.

The husband's duty is clearly to meet the needs of his wife, and that is part of the desire that is spoken of in Genesis. This was taken so seriously that if a man was going to be gone for an

extended period, then there was a debate as to how long the period was to be. If a married man was going to be gone longer than thirty days to study with the rabbi, he had to have his wife's permission to go, because by being gone for that period he was not there to meet her sexual needs. So, we see there is something very special about the marital union, it is to be undertaken with mutual consent and it is to give mutual pleasure.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5, which we looked at just now, is mainline Jewish teaching. God created the sex drive to be an enormously important part of marriage and it is precisely because He values sexuality so highly that He prohibits all other kinds of sexual activity, as we have seen in our discussion on homosexuality and morality generally. All this speaks of the value, honour and rights, God gives to woman.

For the man to be the head of the wife means to lift her up, to give her precedence over himself. Expressed by the sage to the man *"Below your means for yourself and above your means for your wife"* **that** is headship. Most men like the title 'head' of the family but they do not like the job description *"Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her"*.

This is an incredibly tough task; the woman's role is easy compared to this. Wives, submit to your husbands, lovingly allow him the last word. Voluntarily adapt yourself in love to your husband.

Matthew 20:25,26

"You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant".

The model of headship for both the man and the woman is that both should give precedence to the other, which is also the example to set the children.

In love, adapt yourself to the well-being of your spouse and children, for the sake of Jesus, because He is looking for the peace of God in your home.

Putting the first commandment first:

One last word on the male/female roles and specifically the role of woman as God created her. She, as the man, has two roles, if she is married she gives herself **first** to God, and then to her husband. If she is single, she gives herself to God and waits for his provision of a spouse.

Likewise, the man, he gives himself **first** to God and then to his wife.

To see this, let us just quickly look at -

1 Corinthians 7:1,2

“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband”

And to the single: verses 29-35 –

“But I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried is concerned about the things that belong to the Lord - how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world - how he may please his wife. There is also a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world - how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.”

Reason, ***that you may serve the Lord without distraction.***

So, married or single, be content *“to remain with God in that calling in which he was called”* **1 Corinthians 7:24.**

The last word on this part of the talk comes from my previous teaching on Sex, Sexuality and Morality in the 21st Century Church and the point I am pressing is that Jesus must be central in order that everything else and every other relationship, orbits around him; ladies, your husband is not the centre of the universe, husbands, your wife is not, Jesus is.

Those of you who were here for the Sex, Sexuality and Morality teaching may remember I spoke about relationships thus:

“Any time you want to build intimacy with a person before your identity is fully in Christ and you know and feel secure and strong in him, you will be expecting that person to do something for you that he or she cannot do. You will be loving them with a hook - Eros. In other words, when your identity is in Christ, you don’t need others the same way, you don’t have to perform and they don’t have to come through in order for your ultimate needs to be met. The world says ‘Set your hope on this person to come through for you. Make this person the centre of your existence”.

God says ‘I am the centre of your existence, make Me central and your love will change from Eros to Agape.’

The point is this, when we trade the treasure of Christ in us, the hope of glory in our hearts, for anything else, we are decentred and everything flies apart. We must restore the glory of the

indwelling Christ to its flaming, all attracting place in our hearts, at the centre of our lives.

Beloved, I am firmly convinced that what the church in this hour needs, more than it needs revival, is **reformation** - from Eros to Agape, from self-centredness to God centred-ness.

We have presently a self-centred, heal me, feed me, look after me, religion that is a disgrace to the name of our Saviour. Putting Him, and His first commandment first, I am convinced will cure all our ailments and the powerlessness of the present system which is Eros unveiled.

The role of women in the church:

Before we look at the scriptures about the role of women in the church, there needs to be a preface to our study.

Biblically the church should be thought of as a community, an organism, not an organisation. It is a living, dynamic, inter-relational, functioning body, servicing the needs of the whole, of which ***Jesus Christ is the living head***. My life message is '*Jesus is Lord, what are you going to do about it?*' I don't mean that unkindly, but unless we get Him in His rightful place in our lives, we will not come into our true identity *in Him*. Outside of this, we have not discovered our true identity.

He highly esteems us as women, even a cursory glance at the New Testament will prove this. Ladies, let us press on to come into all that Jesus won for us on the cross.

The role of women in the Synagogue and in the Early Church:

Acts 2:42

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

In the book of Acts, the activities of the Synagogue paralleled Jewish life of the first century. The congregation met on various occasions for various purposes, *all designed to meet the needs of the community* physically, emotionally and spiritually.

In the church, people with demonstrable gifts and abilities were elected to positions of leadership by the community. There were certain criteria *"seek out from among you those of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business"* but they walked in the fear of the Lord.

This isn't a church meeting! **Acts 6:3.**

The gatherings at first in the New Testament, were in the existing synagogues and had various offices such as elders, deacons, prophets, pastors or shepherds, teachers, and apostles. The

functions these people from within the 'community' filled, were as a result of prayerfully seeking of the will of the Lord, they were not *ecclesiastical church offices instituted from the 'top'*.

Early church leadership: A gender issue?

The leadership thus in position, existed to equip the people of God both men and women, for individual ministry, so that the congregation as a whole could grow up into, and do what, God intended,

Ephesians 4: 7 - 12

"To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

"When He ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men"

What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended into the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."

There are those today who make much of verse 8 saying that verse 11 implies that the apostles, prophets and so on are gifts that God gives to men only.

But the original language does not mean 'men' in terms of gender. The word that is used here is the word that applies to both male and female. 'Men' here are not biological, it refers to people. In **Genesis 1:27** the term 'man' means humanity and Paul is saying - God gave gifts to *mankind*.

The case for women in ministry today:

To address this issue, we must keep in mind the result of the Fall. In the domestic sphere, the natural sphere, within marriage, man was given the 'rule' over woman. In the spiritual sphere, she was responsible solely to God. It is her one-to-one relationship with Him.

The demands of God are paramount and supersede all human relationships. God expects His every follower to put Him first, regardless of all other claims.

Matthew 10:37-39

"He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

This is the area we will be addressing now as we look at the case for women in ministry in the

church.

Does God anoint women to preach, teach, prophesy, or even lead?

“There is no sex in soul” as the Marechale, General Booth’s daughter, said when she was challenged as a woman in ministry.

Beloved, God makes no mistakes, when He appoints, anoints, commissions and sends a woman into ministry, she is fulfilling her God given role.

I do not want to make a ‘case’ here for women in ministry. I want us to examine some scriptures and come to a valid conclusion about them. I’m not banging a drum, God is the One who promotes, and if there is a specific call on your life *“a man (or woman’s) gift makes way for him/her.”* **Proverbs 18:16**. There is never any need to push. The only need is to be obedient to the call, come when He calls, and let Him be Master of your destiny.

Acts 2:17,18 and Peter is quoting from the book of Joel

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, (then he qualifies it, just in case you weren’t sure) your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams, even on my servants, both men and women, will I pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy”.

Inescapable facts here, sons *and* daughters.

Keep in mind please, prophecy is not silent.

You can’t prophesy and keep your hand over your mouth. We need to hold this because later when we look at women keeping silence, Paul’s injunction in **1 Corinthians 14**, may not mean what we think and have been taught it means. Either we have to be silent, or we can prophesy, speak, one thing or the other and God is not the author of confusion.

Let us go on; how does this work itself out further on in the book of Acts?

Turn with me please to

Acts 18:19,24-26 NIV - and here we have Priscilla and Aquilla - significantly, Priscilla, is mentioned first –

“They arrived at Ephesus where Paul left Priscilla and Aquilla.”

They were Paul’s travelling companions - you had to go some to be included in his tour.

Verse 24:

“Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the Synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately”.

I’m not going to push this too far, but it is clear that they were both involved in *teaching* this erudite man. And again, Priscilla’s name is mentioned first. It is quite possible, therefore, that the writer of Acts, doctor Luke, is indicating that she took the lead in teaching him.

Just in case you think I am making too much of this, let’s look in Romans, because Priscilla was no ordinary woman, no appendage of her husband. In **Romans 16:3-5** we see her again –

“Greet Priscilla and Aquilla, my fellow workers, they risked their lives for me”.

Again, Paul puts her name first. Like Paul, this couple were tent makers. He had previously met them when he came from Athens to Corinth. When he left for Syria he took them with him - and it was sometime later that they met Apollos in Ephesus.

So this was a woman Paul seems proud to have described as a ‘fellow worker’. High praise indeed. This was no mere tea-maker, sock-darner, flower-arranger or house-minder. I cannot believe that her lips were sealed, or her drive for God inhibited in any way, by her sex. There is no sex in soul!

Problem passages:

1 Corinthians 14:26,34-36

26*“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church”*

34*“As in all congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?”*

Remember what I spoke about at the beginning, the natural and the spiritual which we saw in **Genesis. Verse 26** first then, the scripture clearly says ‘**everyone**’ has something to bring - exhortation, reproof, encouragement etc.

This is speaking of the *spiritual* role of everyone, including women. So, what of the ‘women keeping silence’? Is Paul contradicting himself? He has previously said ‘Every woman who prays or prophecies...’ **1 Corinthians 11:5**.

This was no problem at all to the Jews.

In the Synagogue there was a *division* between men and women, husbands and wives, and in the Corinthian church the wives were shouting questions to their husbands, hence Paul says, “*let them learn at home*”, **in the context of the marriage relationship**.

The *natural* relationship where Adam was given rule.

Paul speaks to *husbands and wives*, he is not speaking spiritually. This prohibition on the women was in no way related to their *spiritual* worship, otherwise they would not have been able to praise, pray or prophecy, which we have already seen, they did, where ‘everyone’ brings something.

1 Timothy 2:11-15:

This last scripture is slightly thornier, but nevertheless we must tackle it. What is Paul saying to Timothy in -

1 Timothy 2:11-15

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

That seems pretty categorical on the face of it, and it has been a scripture which has held women back for thousands of years. Not only can we not have authority over men, but we can’t teach either, and the inference is that we were the cause of all the trouble in the first place - no mention of Adam’s part in all this.

Let’s look at what ‘quietness’ and ‘submission’ mean first. Remember that I have argued consistently, that throughout the scriptures we see that woman is in rank under the man because he is her source, in relation to the domestic sphere within marriage, but in spiritual terms, she is responsible solely to God. Two distinct roles. In the first man has dominion, in the second God alone is to exercise control. In the home therefore, man is the head and exercises and carries the responsibility.

So what we see here, is Paul writing to Timothy, not to a *church*, to an *individual*, and giving him the line of authority and instruction for issues *within the home*, this is **domestic** and in the context

of marriage.

If we apply these to the church we are immediately in trouble and find Paul contradicting himself.

We cannot have it both ways - the women cannot observe silence and be vocal at the same time; they cannot be forbidden to teach and exhorted to prophesy at one and the same time.

Incidentally, this is where, if you are single, the teaching on women needing a 'covering' has come from, the idea being that if you are a single woman you should be 'covered' by a man in the church. More of that next time. For the moment, where worship and service to God is concerned, *the woman is free of man's headship and knows only God's.*

We have proved conclusively that a woman may prophesy, and indeed there were women who held the office of prophet in the Old Testament, so that is beyond dispute.

If we are looking at the spiritual gifts, prophecy holds a higher function because it is to the whole church and it comes from the very Throne of God Himself.

You can't get any higher than that.

Taking this as a yardstick, teaching and preaching would come below on the Richter scale. If a woman is free to take part in the greater ministry, who can exclude her from the lesser? God trusts her at the higher level - but man does not trust her at the lower.

When we apply this scripture in Timothy to the ***domestic sphere*** what we see is this.

For a woman to 'teach' her husband in the sense of taking a leading and domineering role, is forbidden.

Paul doesn't allow it.

Remember, he was a student of the Law, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he knew the Old Testament inside out. What he is saying is, this would involve woman coming out of her divinely appointed role and taking on herself the role God had ordained for the man. The scripture now immediately makes sense and no-one would dispute it.

As a matter of interest, what do we see around us all the time? Satan has turned the whole of God's created order upside down. We see the women dominating the men, sit-coms making fun of the man and the woman taking the lead.

The whole issue about Eve is about the *usurping* of the headship.

In these days, God is giving back the headship to the men in the home, where it rightly belongs.

Personally I would say and the women love to have it so. We know when we come into Divine order, long may it continue.

To sum up then, this whole issue is about natural and spiritual and in **1 Timothy 2:12** Paul is referring to a creational ordinance which has remained unaltered through the ages until Jesus comes.

Woman as a natural creature is still subject to the man, but glory to God as a spiritual being in Christ she gains the right, with man, to eat of the Tree of Life.

All the weakness of her heredity in Eve, is swallowed up in the strength of Christ. Her vulnerability is lost in His stability.

In this dimension her femininity disappears so Paul can say to the Galatian church 'There is no male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus' **Galatians 3:28**. We are complete in Christ, not as part of a man, but as a person with our own separate identity.

It is in *this* relationship in Christ that a woman functions in public ministry.

She is joined to Christ, her completion is total. The fact that her first mother was deceived is of no significance in the new order. A functioning, spiritual being she is now wholly at God's disposal.

Finally, we can completely trust the Holy Spirit, He will never anoint a woman to do something she ought not to do.

When a woman is called, chosen, anointed, and sent by God, the blessing on her is apparent and abundant, and the fruit is obvious.

Just to clear up the scripture about head covering - should women wear hats in church?

1 Corinthians 11:3 - 15 - the key is in verse 14 - NIV

"Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is to her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering."

This actually could not be any clearer.

Men, you should have short hair, ladies yours should be longer, in order that the angels can distinguish male from female, in keeping with God's created order.

There is nothing more to it than that.

It is all about keeping God's order, as He created them, male and female.

God bless you, thank you for listening, it's been quite a marathon, but worth it. Next time, biblical submission, what it does and doesn't mean.