

Male Headship

How can your ministry be egalitarian, meaning that both men and women share leadership roles equally, when Scripture says that the man is to be the head of the woman (Ephesians 5:23)?

This entry has been adapted from the commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

Being filled with God’s Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) will result in a manner of life for Paul’s audience different from their previous pagan experience. Many are agreed that the instructions which complete Ephesians ch. 5, vs. 21-33, are an expansion upon a prior message given in Colossians chs. 3 & 4. Other than how Ephesians 2:14-16 is encountered by Messianics, Ephesians 5:21-33 is *the most* debated and controversial part of the entire epistle for today among interpreters. This is why Ben Witherington urges, “the trajectory and contextualizing of the argument are as important as the details of what Paul says.”¹ If not read closely and carefully, we are likely to not only miss some key points of Paul’s instruction to First Century readers, but also significantly misapply them in a modern setting.

Ephesians 5:21-6:9 compose a very important part of Biblical instruction because it concerns the institution of the family, specifically the institution of the family after the arrival of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul describes the relationship husband and wife are to have to one another (Ephesians 5:21-33), the relationship of children to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4), and even the relationship of slaves and masters (Ephesians 6:5-9). It is commonly referred to in theological works by the German term *Haustafel*, meaning “house table.” One point that should not elude us is the fact that for his audience in Asia Minor, Paul is largely subverting (or even countering) ancient Greco-Roman household codes.

What does this mean for the following verse?

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself being the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23, NASU).

A wife is to submit to her husband the same as she would submit to the Lord, as an act of obedience to the Lord—but the principle of mutuality is that the husband too is required to submit: “be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah” (Ephesians 5:21, NASU; cf. vs. 30, 33). In the husband’s submission to his wife, Paul says, “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself being the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23, NASU). As the two are submitted to each other, the husband is to recognize himself as the “head” of his wife. But what does the husband being the “head” of his wife mean, specifically? Does it mean that he gets to treat his wife in whatever way he wants? Does he truly get to be an autocrat?

In the Hellenistic world, the husband being the “head” of his wife did largely mean that he got to be an autocrat. In desiring that women be utilitarian tools of the state, Plato said “if we are going to use men and women for the same purposes, we must teach them the same things” (*Republic* 451e).² This reveals that in the Greek world, giving men and women equal opportunities was not something looked upon favorably. But it was Plato’s student Aristotle who specifically taught, “the relation of male to female is naturally that of the superior to the inferior, of the ruling to the ruled. This general principle must similarly hold good of all human beings generally” (*Politics* 1.1254b).³ The question that has dogged many interpreters of Ephesians 5:23, especially in the past

¹ Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 314.

² Plato: *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 161.

³ Aristotle: *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.

twenty to thirty years, is whether or not the Christian Church (and by extension us as the Messianic movement) has adopted a view of the husband being “head” more consistent with Scripture, *or* more consistent with Hellenism.

There are two different views regarding “head” present in today’s evangelical Christian theology:

1. The traditional or **complementarian** view, which sees “head” as meaning the husband’s authority over the wife.
2. The **egalitarian** view (simply derived from the French *égal*, meaning “equal”), which sees “head” as relating to the man being the “source” or “origin” of the woman.

Complementarianism

Most of us in our religious experience have been exposed to the **complementarian** view of “head” in Ephesians 5:23. This is a view which holds that males and females are essentially equal in terms of their spiritual standing before God (cf. Galatians 3:28), but that there are specific roles only designated for males. Since Paul is writing in terms of an ancient society where a top-down, male-dominated family structure was the norm, it would seem fairly obvious that the man, who was created first, should take the lead. The more powerful male family members were responsible for the well being of weaker family members, namely the women. Within this framework, the submission of the wife to her husband comes because she is ordered under her husband. Complementarians consider that support of their view of “head” as meaning “authority” or “first,” comes from Ephesians 1:22 where Yeshua is seen as “head over all things.”

The available lexical definitions of *kephalē* (κεφαλή) do allow it “to denote superior rank” (*BDAG*).⁴ From this point of view, when Paul says “the man is the head of a woman” (1 Corinthians 11:3; NASU), and in this epistle that Yeshua is the Head of the assembly (4:15; cf. Colossians 1:18), the husband is first in the family with the wife coming second. Some suggest that Tanach typology of Israel being the wife of God is at work in Ephesians 5:23 (Isaiah 54:4; 62:4; Ezekiel 16:7; Hosea 2:16). As the husband is the head of the wife, the traditional perspective, as summarized by Harold W. Hoehner, would be “It means that she recognizes her husband is the head of the home and responds to him accordingly without usurping his authority to herself.”⁵ So in this schema, it is the husband who would be the “head of the household.”

Too much can be made of complementarians who argue that wives must submit to their husbands as though the husband is a complete superior, and women have little value. The basis of a wife’s submission to her husband is obedience to the Lord and is motivated by love. Peter T. O’Brien, supporting a complementarian view, is right to remind us, “Subordination smacks of exploitation and oppression that are deeply resented. But authority is not synonymous with tyranny, and the submission to which the apostle refers does not imply inferiority.”⁶ Indeed, the vast majority of complementarians in today’s Christianity encourage extreme respect and honor to be shown to women. A. Skevington Wood concurs, “He is not implying that women are inferior to men or that all women should be subject to men. The subjection, moreover, is voluntary, not forced.”⁷ The issue at hand in Ephesians 5:23 is the relation of husbands and wives in marriage. O’Brien is quite specific to state,

“The apostle is not urging every woman to submit to every man, but wives to their husbands. The use of the middle voice of this verb (cf. Col. 3:18) emphasizes the voluntary character of the submission.”⁸

It is also too much to say that the traditional perspective argues that a total and blinded obedience of wives to husbands is somehow taught *or demanded* by Paul (and likewise as though Paul would also argue blind obedience to civil government in Romans 13). This is not true at all, and not only of interpreters from the past century. Nineteenth Century commentator Adam Clarke emphasized that a wife must submit to her husband in “every lawful thing; for it is not intimated that they should obey their husbands in any thing criminal, or in any thing detrimental to the interests of their souls.”⁹ If a husband is engaged in illegal activities, or activities that clearly violate God’s will and Law, then a wife is surely expected to resist.

⁴ *BDAG*, 542.

⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), pp 640-641.

⁶ Peter T. O’Brien, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 412.

⁷ A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in Frank E. Gaebelstein, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11:75.

⁸ O’Brien, 411.

⁹ *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible. E-Sword 8.0.8*. MS Windows 9x. Franklin, TN: Equipping Ministries Foundation, 2008.

Traditionalists hold to men and women being spiritual equals in the Lord, but advocate that a man's position as leader is necessary for familial cohesion. F. Foulkes comments, "in the family, for its order and its unity, there must be leadership, and the leadership is that of the husband and father."¹⁰ But he goes on to describe how a married woman with equal rights in society may "make herself a career as well as her husband," and how "the New Testament...[says] she may do so, provided that it does not mean the sacrifice of the divine pattern for home life."¹¹ Most complementarians today do not oppose women in the workplace, and would solely argue that the issue of male "headship" only concerns the husband as benevolent leader of his family. Christian complementarians rightly argue against any kind of harsh or dictatorial leadership on behalf of the husband toward his wife and family.¹²

Egalitarianism

A second, and widely growing position in today's evangelicalism, is that of **egalitarianism**. Egalitarians view Galatians 3:28 as meaning that Yeshua the Messiah has brought total equality to the genders, and that roles previously allowed for men in the Tanach can now be opened up for women.¹³ The lexical definition of *kephalē* (κεφαλή) as "source" like that "of a river" (*LS*),¹⁴ meaning the headwaters of a river, is something that egalitarians strongly appeal to.¹⁵ When Paul says, "Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah" (1 Corinthians 11:3, NASU), "head" as meaning "source" or "origin" is what is intended, as from the Godhead (*ho Theos*, ὁ θεός) came forth the Messiah, the Messiah is the Creator of the world including the man/Adam, and from the side of the man/Adam came Eve. Philip B. Payne asks how if *kephalē*/head here is to mean "authority," "Why would Paul say that Christ is the authority of every male human being? Is there any sense in which Christ would be the authority over men but not over women? If so, that would undermine the very universal lordship of Christ."¹⁶

In Ephesians 5:23, viewing *kephalē*/head as "source," when Paul says that the husband is the "head" of his wife, it is to be a reminder of what Adam said of Eve: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23, NASU). Egalitarians strongly argue that "head" meaning any kind of "authority" in Ephesians 5:23 is something that interpreters have read into the text, not being supported by an ideal of male-female equality in the Lord. It is something more influenced by how in much of modern English, the term "head" is associated with leadership, not something always seen in Biblical Greek.

(The idea that most egalitarians are somehow "feminists," because they advocate that men and women be given equal treatment in the Body of Messiah, is quite dumbfounded. Not withstanding a modern feminist movement that advocates abortion rights and worship of a mother goddess, historically the feminist movement has had many things that both Jews and Christians have supported. This would include things like: opposition to physical abuse and rape, wife beating, sexual harassment and exploitation, bride burning in countries like India, harsh physical labor in rural Africa, abortions of female children because they are female, and infirm female children being allowed to die because they are female. **These are things that all complementarians oppose.**)¹⁷

Does Paul's usage of "head" automatically equal "authority"? What does the Greek term *kephalē* (κεφαλή) really mean? There has actually been a considerable amount of ink spilled defending the view that *kephalē* should

¹⁰ Francis Foulkes, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 155.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 156-157.

¹² One of the best complementarian perspectives that I have seen is expressed by Craig Blomberg in James R. Beck, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp 123-184.

¹³ Keep in mind that the Tanach Scriptures are themselves rather revolutionary when it comes to the role of women, especially when the Torah's law codes are compared to those of the Ancient Near East.

Consult the author's article "Answering the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah" for more details (appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*), as well as the relevant sections of *TorahScope, Volume I* by Mark Huey.

¹⁴ *LS*, 430.

¹⁵ There is actually some lexical debate over what *kephalē* (κεφαλή) should be defined as. *BDAG*, 542 states that *kephalē* is "not source." William David Spencer addresses this, remarking, "Readers should note, it is one thing to emphasize a definition of 'head' within the category of authority, but quite another to specify that the word *cannot* as well mean 'source' in the New Testament" ("Editor's Reflections" *Priscilla Papers* Issue 24:2, Spring 2010).

¹⁶ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 130.

¹⁷ For a more detailed description, consult Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp 5-10.

be viewed as “source” in some key Pauline texts describing gender roles,¹⁸ and strong rebuttals issued holding to the position that *kephalē* means “source.”¹⁹ While it is easy to think that the debate over what *kephalē* means has been limited to the scholastic arena,²⁰ it is steadily making its way into materials more common to be accessed by the normal layperson. The publication *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, for example, describes how “Besides its literal, physical meaning (‘head of man or beast’), *kephalē* had numerous metaphorical meanings, including that of ‘source.’ It is this meaning that seems most suited to the texts (1 Cor 11:3 and Eph 5:23) in which the relationship of husband and wife (or man and woman) is addressed.”²¹

In terms of the ongoing discussion over what *kephalē* really means throughout the Apostolic Scriptures, most especially in texts like Ephesians 5:23, Aida Besançon Spencer summarizes some important points to consider:

“For us ‘Who is head here?’ means ‘Who is the boss?’ Yet many excellent studies have been done in recent years to prove that ‘head’ (kephale) when used in Greek never stood for the decision maker. Such studies are reinforced by looking at the Bible. ‘Head’ or kephale can refer to a literal head (Matt. 8:20), to hair only (Acts 18:18), to the whole person (a synecdoche, a part representing the whole, as in Ex. 16:16), the top or foundation (Gen. 8:5; Matt 21:42), the source (Col. 2:19), life (Isa. 43:4; Acts 18:6), the first-born (Col. 1:18), and a blessing (Deut. 28:13, 44). What meaning does Paul have in mind in Ephesians 5:23? Whatever meaning Paul has in mind would in some way be analogous to Christ’s relationship to the church.”²²

Spencer goes on to conclude that if it were Paul’s intention to use “head” as meaning decision-maker or authority figure, “he would have used *arche* or ‘ruler’ (as in Luke 12:11), or ‘judge’ or ‘mind’ (used in Philo as the dominant aspect of humans, e.g., Allegory II.5-8).”²³ One of the available definitions of *archē* (ἀρχή) is clearly, “**an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority**” (BDAG).²⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln indicates something that we as Messianics should pay close attention to: “In its LXX usage, where it translated the Hebrew מֶלֶךְ, *rōš*, κεφαλή also took on at times the further connotations of that Hebrew term and had the force of determinative source or origin.”²⁵ Payne also asserts, “The LXX translators...almost always chose not to use κεφαλή when מֶלֶךְ means ‘leader,’” further claiming “This is compelling evidence that the vast majority of LXX translators did not regard kephalē, as appropriate to convey the metaphorical meaning ‘leader.’”²⁶ Egalitarians would argue that “source” language is what is used in Ephesians 4:15-16 where Paul describes Yeshua as “head” of the body, also seen in Colossians 2:19 where Yeshua is the source of life for the *ekklēsia*, “the head, from whom the entire body [originates], being supplied and held together” (NASU). In Payne’s estimation for Ephesians 5:23, “The best solution is probably to translate κεφαλή, as ‘source’ and add a note, ‘literally, “head.””²⁷

If “source” language for “head” is what is being used in Ephesians 5:23, then it only serves to reinforce the fact that husbands are to love their wives the same as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:28). The analogy made would be that Eve originated from Adam, and so the husband needs to think of the wife as personally originating from

¹⁸ “1 Corinthians 11:2-3: Head/Source Relationships,” in Payne, pp 117-139; specifically his fifteen reasons on why *kephalē* does not exclusively mean “authority.”

¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephalē* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), pp 425-468.

²⁰ Cf. C.C. Kroeger, “Head,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 375-377; J.K. McVay, “Head, Christ as,” in *Ibid.*, pp 377-378.

²¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 641.

A more recent example I found of this is seen in *God’s Game Plan: The Athlete’s Bible 2007*, a study Bible published by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). While this publication employed the HCSB, with translation principles that protest the usage of inclusive language in English Bible versions, its comments on Ephesians 5:23 concur closer with an egalitarian view:

“The word ‘head’ when used today has the sense of ‘ruler’ or ‘authority.’ However, in Greek when ‘head’ is used in a metaphorical sense as it is here, it also means ‘origin’ as in the ‘source (head) of a river.’ Woman has her origins in man (Gen. 2:18-23) just as the church has its origins in Christ” (Nashville: Serendipity House Publishers, 2007, p 1149).

²² Aida Besançon Spencer, “From Poet to Judge: What Does Ephesians 5 Teach About Male-Female Roles?” *Priscilla Papers* Issue 4:3, Summer 1990.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ BDAG, 138.

²⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), pp 368-369.

²⁶ Payne, pp 120, 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

himself.²⁸ In the view of Witherington, “It is of course quite true that Paul does not appear here in the guise of the modern feminist. He still speaks of the headship of the man in the family. But that headship has been transformed by the model of Christ.”²⁹ It would not be a headship in terms of the husband being the only decision maker, but an equal partner along with his wife in the marriage experience. Any subordination of the wife within marriage is something that came as a direct result of the Fall (Genesis 3:16), and should now be a status reversed by the work of Yeshua (Galatians 3:28).

The issue of viewing “head” as “source” for egalitarians in Ephesians 5:23 is that there is a mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21, 30) which is to be seen in the Body of Messiah, which is a distinct manifestation of Believers’ being filled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and being changed by God’s love. Husbands are to treat their wives the same as they would themselves, as opposed to husbands being absolute autocrats—something that was surely affluent in Greco-Roman society. Egalitarians remind us that while Paul’s words about submission are also given in a context where slaves are to submit to their masters (Ephesians 6:5-9), masters were required to submit to slaves if they were Believers (as Paul implies in Philemon). As is further stated, “we are [all] members of His body” (Ephesians 5:30, NASU), which for the marriage relationship means “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” (Ephesians 5:33, NASU).

The value of a good wife to a good husband is not an exclusive concept to Paul. Proverbs 31:10-11 declares, “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain” (NASU). This section of the Tanach actually depicts a husband and wife partnership in business, with the two working together for the mutual benefit of their household (Proverbs 31:12-27). While there may be a great deal of discussion of the male as “head of the household,” egalitarians point out that such language **is not seen in the Apostolic Scriptures**—and they would be correct.³⁰ This phraseology is instead **derived directly from Hellenistic philosophy**; it was Aristotle who said “the head of the household rules over both wife and children” (*Politics* 1.1259a).³¹ A more literal rendering of *kai gar gunaikos archei kai teknōn* (καὶ γὰρ γυναῖκός ἄρχει καὶ τέκνων)³² might instead be, “rules over wife and children,”³³ but the point taken is that the verb *archō* (ἄρχω) appears here, related to the noun *archē* (ἀρχή)—and not *kephalē*/head as used in Ephesians 5:23.

Plutarch later taught, “So is it with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman, [but] not as the owner has control over a piece of property” (*Advice to Bride and Groom* 142e).³⁴

Considering these ancient sentiments, egalitarians often argue that the premise for male “headship” equating “authority” is something that first affected First Century B.C.E.-C.E. Judaism, having adopted some Hellenistic cultural norms in treating women, going off the Biblical mark. These are Hellenistic views of women that likewise made their way into the emerging Christian Church of the Second Century. Craig S. Keener notes how “Some marriages may have been nearly equal, with husbands and wives working in the market together; but the

²⁸ Lest anyone think that the creation of Adam first somehow denotes a Divine preference for males, we cannot forget how the Genesis creation account directly countered the competing Mesopotamian mythology. In *Atrahasis*, human beings were given birth by a mother goddess to be the slaves of the gods.

Cf. Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp 14-15ff.

In the Biblical creation account, contrary to this, humanity is made to commune with God in a garden planted by Him (Genesis 3:8). Females must join with males in order to conceive a child, similar to how the womb-goddess must give birth. But from the Biblical point of view, God portrayed as male cannot give birth, as man and woman are made by the Lord *ex nihilo* or out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3).

²⁹ Witherington, 323.

³⁰ In Torah passages such as Numbers 25:15 where *rosh ‘ummot beit-av* (רֹאשׁ אֲמוֹת בֵּית־אָב), “the tribal head of an ancestral house” (NJPS) appears, the LXX notably renders it as *archontos ethnous...oikou patrias estin* (ἀρχοντος ἔθνους...οἴκου πατριᾶς ἐστίν), with the term *kephalē* used in Ephesians 5:23 noticeably absent. Such a “head of the house(hold)” is also not the leader of an individual family, but rather a large nomadic clan within a tribe of Ancient Israel.

³¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 33.

³² The Greek source text for these works has been accessed via the Perseus Collection <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>>.

³³ Aristotle: *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Adelaide, South Australia: University of Adelaide Library, 2007). Accessible online at <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8po/>>.

³⁴ Plutarch: *Advice to Bride and Groom*. Accessible online at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Coniugalia_praecepta*.html>.

ideal model propagated in ancient society was that wives should be submissive and obedient, often even slavishly so.”³⁵

Viewing *kephalē*/head as “source” is changing a great deal of contemporary thought in today’s evangelical Christianity. It has helped men have a much higher view of women, and it has helped women see that they need not allow themselves to suffer any kind of “Biblically-based” harassment and/or abuse from men simply because they are female. How Ephesians 5:23 is interpreted in evangelical theology in the days ahead will be a continuing debate, specifically as it regards the ordination of female clergy.³⁶ This is a debate that will affect today’s Messianic movement sooner than many currently think, as it is directly related to the already present discord and battling over Jewish and non-Jewish equality and inclusion.

While a great deal of background material must be considered in properly interpreting Ephesians 5:22-23, it would be a mistake for us to overlook the important Christology here. Paul has said that “the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly]” (NASU), *ho Christos kephalē tēs ekklēsiās* (ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας). The reason He is the “head” of the assembly is because He is “the Savior of the body,” *Sōtēr tou sōmatos* (σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος). Messiah being the Savior of His Body is a concept directly taken from the Tanach, where the LORD God is depicted as the Savior of His people (Deuteronomy 32:15; 1 Samuel 10:19; Psalm 24:5; Isaiah 12:2; 45:15; 62:11; Micah 7:7; Habakkuk 3:18). The usage of Yeshua being head of the Body, here, leads me to conclude that Ephesians 4:15-16 is what is more in view, as opposed to Ephesians 1:22. The power and vitality of Yeshua as Divine Savior comes from the head to the rest of His Body—us as Believers. Yeshua is the Source in Heaven of what His people on Earth are supposed to be.

The teaching for husbands here is that being the “source” of their wives, they are to act toward their wives the same way that Yeshua has done for all people—sacrificing themselves if need be.

The concept of Biblical submission for the Body of Messiah begins with the main admonition, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Messiah” (Ephesians 5:21, NASU). From this mutual submission to one another, the wife is to submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22, 24). She is to respect her husband because he is her *kephalē* (“head”), correctly meaning her origin as Eve came from Adam (Ephesians 5:23; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3, Grk.). Husbands demonstrate a submission to their wives via a manifestation of the love Yeshua Himself demonstrated, by dying for His followers (Ephesians 5:25-27). Most significant and subversive for the ancient period, is how “husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies” (Ephesians 5:28), a testament to how woman came from man as her head/source. Jewish and classical history are both replete with examples of how women were commonly treated as either the significant inferiors of men, or sub-human to some degree.³⁷ Here, Paul expresses how “no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Messiah does the [assembly]” (Ephesians 5:29, NASU). A husband is to treat his wife the same way he would *treat himself*. The relationship and oneness that husband and wife are to have together is to teach Believers important things about the relationship that the Messiah has to the *ekklēsia* (Ephesians 5:30-32).

The significant requirement that the Apostle Paul places on the husbands in Asia Minor is, “husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ephesians 5:28, NASU). While one can certainly see a reaffirmation of one loving his neighbor as himself,³⁸ loving one’s neighbor is not as specific as husbands loving their wives *hōs ta heautōn sōmata* (ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα)—“as their own bodies.” Presumably, the same careful attention and respect that a husband shows his own body, is the same kind of attention that he should now show toward his wife. As Paul has said it previously in 1 Corinthians 7:4, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*”

³⁵ Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 166.

³⁶ Keener reminds us that women taking a role in Christian ministry, at least, is not something that has only now emerged with the modern feminist movement:

“Women’s ministry...became increasingly accepted in many times of revival, including the Wesleyan revival that changed the course of spiritual life in Britain and the Second Great Awakening in the United States. Pentecostal and Holiness groups were ordaining women long before modern secular feminism and unbiblical arguments for women’s ordination made it a divisive issue in some circles” (*Two Views of Women in Ministry*, 244).

³⁷ Cf. summary in Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2000), pp 71-92, 101-109.

³⁸ Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

(NASU). The mutual responsibility does not just relate to spirituality or personal attitudes, but what a man or woman does with the human body God has framed, as the Psalmist declares “for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, NASU).

(The commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* has much more to say regarding the issues of Ephesians 5:21-6:9).