

Good evening, so having heard David read the text I guess it's with a mixture of fear and excitement that I stand before you tonight...

**Fear** because this is the most controversial scripture for the Church of England at the moment – in truth - as a church, we're self-destructing over it.

**Excitement** because I think what the Bible says about men, women and the Gospel of Christ is revolutionary - and liberating and absolutely what we need to hear today.

So tonight I want to talk about how men and women relate to each other in Christ.

And it's not going to be easy.

Some will think I have gone *way too far*;

Others will think that I have *not gone far enough*

But whether you agree with me or not,

The issue is whether you think

I have taken God's word and done justice to it.

Have I expounded God's word faithfully... That's the question.

For in the end I am not preaching from my own thoughts –

It is not what I say that counts

It's whether this is what is saying here...

and that it is for you to judge.

Traditionally, this text has been used to say that man is the leader of woman in church and in family.

But I think we need to take a fresh look at whether that is what this text is saying.

I say this because:

Firstly, the translation that we hold in our hands has been done by men, accessing male theologians, living predominantly in a male world – and that has got to have influenced their approach;

Secondly, this teaching is about men and women in general –

and therefore its application must be about men and women in general –

The application cannot simply be limited to “church and family”.

This passage is talking about how men and women relate in principle, and therefore it must apply in principle to the whole of life.

It must apply to our life of church, family, politics, business and society.

Indeed this is how it used to be applied!

It used to be that only men could have power,

that only men could vote,

that only men were the bosses,

that only men went to University

but now we say “oh well, it doesn't apply like that anymore –

now it only applies to the world of “church and family”

Well that's not good enough!

*What is sauce for the goose has got to be sauce for the gander.*

If Man is head of the woman in the family and

if man is head of the woman in church –

then he must also be head of the woman in politics and  
head of the woman in business and  
head of the woman in society too.

This passage is about general principles and must apply generally to the whole of life.

and thirdly this text is about the practice of a culture 2000 years ago – and we need to see what it means for us today.

So I think its time we had a fresh look at this text and  
tonight I want to say two things:

- That men and women are secure in Christ; and
- That men and women are valued in Christ.

Tonight is about  
this most complicated, fraught and misunderstood –  
this most delightful, exquisite and frustrating of relationships:  
men and women - Venus and Mars – in Christ.

*But first lets take a look at the problem facing us.*  
<video>

OK I want to talk about 2 things  
Why men and women are secure in Christ and  
how they are valued in Christ

### **1. Firstly Men and Women are Secure in Christ.**

Paul says

*v3 Now I want you to realize that  
the head of every man is Christ,  
and the head of the woman is man,  
and the head of Christ is God.*

Here's the question:

in what sense is Christ the Head of Man and Man the Head of woman?

*That is the \$64,000 question!*

What does that mean?

**Well you know ever since the beginning of time the relationship between men and women has been troubled.**

*Amanda and I have most problems in our marriage by  
our inability to communicate even when we are talking to each other ☺  
Our inability to understand what the other person is saying when their mouth is moving.  
Indeed our inability to let each other know what we are doing, its legendary in our family!  
Communication between Men and Women seems to be unexpectedly difficult.  
It has always been thus...*

Come with me to Genesis chapter 3

**1.1 And let me show you the first classic error in how the sexes relate.**

Genesis chapter 3v6

Eve is having a conversation with the Devil... Now this is NEVER a good thing!

The Devil is tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

Adam is there, but “hey”, Eve is just getting on with it.

v6 reads: “*when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom,*

*she took some and ate it.*

*She also gave some to her husband, **who was with her**, and he ate it”.*

Great! They are standing, right next to each other –

They are about to make the most disastrous decision in human history  
and do they talk it?!

*Do they heck as like!*

The bloke just stands there like a stuffed dummy

while the woman is outflanked!

This is so bad on so many levels.

But there are two sins here.

**Adam’s sin is the sin of abdication.**

He just stands there and watches it all unravel and he doesn’t lift a finger!

he has done precisely “squat, de nada, nothing, zip...” to help Eve out

He just abdicates all responsibility.

He just sits on his backside and watches the world go to pot!

Adam’s sin is that he doesn’t step up to the mark –

he doesn’t take leadership when it *was necessary* for him to do so!

he just watches the woman take the strain!

*His idea of a 50/50 relationship is*

*she irons – he wrinkles; she cleans - he dirties; she gets the food off the tree and he eats.*

On the other hand Eve – is no innocent either –

She way out there on her own.

She is acting **independently** of Adam.

Just because he is being useless

doesn’t mean she should be getting on with it without him!

They are partners, they were meant to work together –

and yet she is taking the initiative independently of Adam.

This is what the relationship looks like

Adam Abdicates – Eve is Independent.

That’s’ the first error...

**1.2** The second error is the opposite

God says to Eve in Genesis 3:16

*“Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule of you.”*

He will rule over you. You’ll want him but he’ll boss you!

It looks like this...

The man dominates and the woman is dependent.

The consequence of the fall is that too many men use their strength and their natural aggression to dominate women.

So today,

- a 1/5 of all women report being physically or sexually abused by men at some point in their life.
- Domestic violence by 'men against women' accounts for more A&E female admissions than traffic accidents, muggings and rapes combined.
- a 1/3 of all women who are murdered, are killed by husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends.

This is how it is...

for too many men they are way out of balance

But in spite of this too women just come back for more!

They find themselves **defining** themselves by their need of a man

They see themselves as incomplete without a man

And the tragedy is that all you need to do is watch Jeremy Kyle for 30 minutes to be astounded at how many women **choose** to shack up with complete losers!

This is what it looks like!

But this is not how it should be!

### 1.3 THIS is how God made us to be...

Before all of this God said in Genesis 1v26

*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness –  
in the image of God he created them – male and female he created them.*

equal in the image of God, but different: male and female  
equal in substance, but different as left is to right  
equal in importance but inter-dependent.

not with one dominant and the other dependent  
not with one abdicating responsibility and the other INdependent,  
But in partnership.  
Different but equal.

And so now we come to

*1 Corinthians chapter 11v3*

*the head of every man is Christ,*

*and the head of the woman is man,*

*and the head of Christ is God.*

So what does this word "head" mean?

Well, for us, it conjures up meanings of : superiority, rank, importance

"I'm the head" sounds like its saying "I am the boss, I am more important!"

But humans always think in these terms –

(born out of our own insecurity) we always want to know who is more important than who, who is boss!

But if the gospel has taught us **anything**

then it has taught us NOT to think in these terms

The gospel teaches us that we are to be servants of each other,

we are to sacrifice ourselves for each other.  
we are to be humble before each other,  
we are to submit to one another...

Surely any Christian who thinks this word means “boss” should have all sorts of alarm bells ringing!

In fact this word “head”, is the greek word Kephale” and has three meanings.

- it can mean “leader, the one with authority” – OR
- it can mean “source” or “extremity” –  
like “the head of a river” or like “author” or like “header tank” or like “scouting ahead” - or
- it can mean “hat or wig or cap” – something you put on your head to cover and protect it.

And since this passage talks about “hats” and since it talks about “who came first” (who is the source)

I want to suggest that passage reads better

Man “is the covering, the protection (the hat), the one who goes ahead (the source) of woman”

just as Christ is the “is the covering, the protection, the one who goes ahead of man”

just as God is the “covering, the protection, the one who goes ahead of Christ”

In other words what this passage is saying is

man you have a role to play,

not to dominate women but to protect them,

not to abdicate responsibility but to go ahead when the need arises.

In other words, God looks at men and women – and thinks, what instructions can I give to help men keep the balance?

I know,

I know that Men have a propensity to sin by abdicating responsibility – so I’ll say:

don’t you dare – you have a role to play - get up off your back-side, and get out there and be a partner to this woman.

I know that

Men have a propensity to sin by abusing women –

So I’ll say:

don’t you dare - you have a role to play - you are to be her covering, her protection, to lay your life down for her.

This is not about who is boss, or who is more important.

**The world thinks like this!**

This is about man not abdicating responsibility, not abusing his power

But taking the lead **when he needs to** and being a covering, a protection for the woman **when he needs to**.

But God hasn’t finished yet because women can get out of balance too.

Women may say since men are being so horrible –

why do we need them!

Sisters can do it for themselves!

OR

Women can simply become door-mats to men

So God says

*v4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head.  
v5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head.  
v6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off;  
and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head.*

What he is saying is this

Men you've got a problem 'stepping up to the plate' – so don't you wear a covering – because you have a job to do –

don't you wear a covering, because you mustn't run for cover when something needs doing!

Stop playing your computer games, stop hiding – you have a job to do!

exercise some spiritual authority, exercise some spiritual leadership

bring your children to church, say grace over the dinner table, teach your children to tithe, get involved in church –

don't just let the woman do it all!

So your symbol of your authority is “no hat” –

because you should not be hiding behind cover.

And Women you have to understand that you have authority too.

The fact that you wear a hat symbolises that you have authority

In a world dominated by men – you have authority!

In Christ, you can pray and to prophesy to the church!

Now this is **revolutionary** for this culture –

up to this point women weren't even allowed to be present in the same room as men in the synagogue,

Well in Christ, not only can they be in the same room, not only can they pray – but now they can prophecy, they can preach!

This is incredible stuff!

Women you can exercise authority, you can exercise spiritual leadership

But God says don't you take it too far,

don't act independently of man...

Your symbol for your authority is a covering – a hat.

Men's symbol is “no covering” because they shouldn't hide

The Woman's symbol is “a covering” – that's their badge of authority.

Now today those symbols don't mean anything

Today hats and no hats mean nothing to us

But the principle remains the same:

**the balance must be maintained.**

Women are not to be independent of men or dependent on men – we are to be inter-dependent

Men are not to abdicate responsibility or dominate woman – we are to be inter-dependent

Now let me ask you

Does this not sound more like the voice of Jesus?

You say “but Steve it says Christ is the head of man, it **doesn't say** Christ is the head of woman” - so what's that about?

Look the Bible doesn't exhaustively qualify everything that it says –  
Its not a text book.  
It is a love letter.  
Every passage does not say everything on the subject.

Look,  
In Ephesians 5v28, God says “that husbands love your wives”  
He doesn't say “wives love your husbands”.  
He doesn't say it!  
But just because he doesn't say it – doesn't it mustn't happen!  
Wives **should** love their husbands, Husbands **should** love their wives.  
And Christ loves both

In Ephesians 5v22. God says “wives submit to your husbands”  
BUT It ALSO says in the same sentence than we should submit to each other  
And we know that Christ submitted himself, gave himself to us

It says in 1 Corinthians 11v8 it says that “the woman (Eve) comes from the Man (Adam),  
but we know that all Men are born of Women  
and we know that ALL come from God.  
do you see?

So did Jesus not take the lead when men AND women were in trouble?  
Did he not come to rescue Men and Women when we were powerless?  
Did he not step up to the plate!  
Did he not lay his life down for men AND women?  
Did he not become our protection from death and sin for MEN and Women?

Yes Jesus is our head, our protection, our covering!  
Men and Women.  
He is the one who took the initiative,  
He is the one who covered us with his love, with his forgiveness, with his very blood.  
He is our protection

He never abdicated responsibility  
He never tried to dominate us  
He made sure we know how precious we are!  
In Christ men and women are secure  
Without Christ men and women are lost,  
we face death alone AND we are separated from God forever!

Do you see? Men and Women are Secure in Christ!

## **2. Secondly, Men and Women are valued in Christ**

God says...

*v7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God;  
but the woman is the glory of man.*

*v8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;*

*v9 neither was man created for THE woman, but woman for THE man*

Now at first it would seem that these are tough verses to hear

v7 says that “woman is the glory of man because woman came from man”.  
And that’s right. She IS the glory of man

And it says “that man is the glory of God because man came from God”  
And that is right too. Man IS the glory of God

And then in v9 it says that woman was made for man  
And that’s right too.  
Eve was made for Adam.

AND if that is **all** it said – then that would be troubling,  
for it seems to denigrate women.  
But verse 11 shows us that the story is not over!

*v11 says,*

*In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman*

In other words Men and Women are inter-dependent (they are to help **each other**) – not just woman to help man, but man to help woman. Interdependent.

*For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman.*

Men and Women came from each other –

Woman came from Adam and she is **his** glory

BUT *all men* come from Women – and so all men are **their** glory;

*And everything comes from God*

and so in fact we are ALL God’s glory!:

Men and Women, young and old, Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor...

we are ALL God’s glory

This is incredible....

God is saying Men and Women have a place alongside each other

inter-dependent with each other

reflecting to the glory of God to each other.

This is DYNAMITE to the culture of the age.

This is A REVOLUNTIONARY message for the early church.

and it was considered VERY, VERY DANGEROUS!

Think of the threat that such a message had to Male dominated groups of the time,

Think of what it meant for the Synagogue, if the church was beginning to teach women alongside men,  
what a threat that would be!

Think of the danger it spelt to men-only social structures!

So God says...

*v10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.*

This word Angels means “messenger” but it can also be translated “spy”

So

*v10 reads, For this reason, and because of the SPYS, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.*

It was **imperative** that as women began to exercise their new found freedom – they did not undermine men – because people were watching!

It was crucial that as they were given new honour by the gospel - They did not dishonour men - because people were watching!

The spies were watching and they would “gladly spread a bad report about the churches”.  
So Paul says: “keep it in balance, don’t go over the top”.  
Have a sign of your own authority on your head –  
You have all the value you could ever want in being a woman in Christ.

You see our value is not found in how dominant we are  
Its not found in our gender,  
Its not found in our power,  
It is found in the fact that we bear the image of God and  
that He has written a promise over us.

**So let me close with this.**

and some of you have seen this at an assembly but its worth repeating.

Look,

This is a dumb question but how much is this worth? <£10> Why?

Because it bears the image of the Sovereign and because  
it has a promise written over it – I promise to pay....

OK here is a piece of paper, it is the same size  
but it has no image on it and no promise  
how much is it worth <nothing>.

Now what happens

If this £10 note goes through a terrible time –  
maybe it gets abused by some man,  
maybe it just gets caught up by life’s storms,  
How much is it worth, now? → £10.

Let’s say something happens to it that really screws it up  
Maybe it gets called worthless, or useless, or rubbish all its life  
and its now really screwed up.  
How much is it worth? → £10.

Perhaps for a while it gets lost  
and people tread on it  
perhaps it gets grubby and dirty and ends up looking quite wretched  
How much is it worth? → £10.

Perhaps life breaks it in two.

How much is it worth? → £10.

WHY?

Because it still bears the Sovereign's image and it still has the promise to pay written over it

You and Me

we can get hurt

we can get caught by life's storms,

we can get really screwed up

we can be called worthless, and useless, and rubbish

we can get lost

we can make mistakes and feel grubby and dirty

we can be broken

But we are valuable

Not because we have power,

not because we are the boss,

not because of our gender,

But because we bear the image of God

And Jesus has written a promise over us .... to pay ... with his life.

That's what this passage says – we are the glory of God

He thinks you are...

and always will be ... wonderful.

Men and Women, partners

at home, in church, in the world, in business, in politics – everywhere

Men and Women, interdependent

at home, in church, in the world, in business, in politics – everywhere

Men take the lead when you need to – never dominate, always step up to the mark

at home, in church, in the world, in business, in politics – everywhere

Women don't be door-mats, but don't write men off either

at home, in church, in the world, in business, in politics – everywhere

We are loved by Christ, covered by Christ, protected by Christ.

Glorified and valued by Christ – forever.

At home, in church, in the world, in business, in politics – everywhere.