

## Which are the explicit texts?

### IDENTIFYING EXPLICIT TEXTS

Key texts guiding our understanding of a topic are those which provide instruction, teaching, commandments, or guidance with regard to a particular topic. Such texts are identified by means of the kind of criteria described in the rules for interpretation written by brother James Foreman and brother Colin Byrnes.<sup>1</sup>

Brother Foreman wrote:

‘Fifth. The truth in relation to any doctrine **must be established by those passages which speak of it in positive and unequivocal language**, and those texts belonging to the same subject **but which only admit of inferential testimony**, no inference should be drawn from them at variance **with the truths already established by positive texts.**’<sup>2</sup>

Brother Byrnes wrote:

‘**We must avoid basing doctrine on passages that only infer** e.g. Thomas' statement 'My Lord and my God' to a believer in the Trinity, teaches that Jesus is part of a triune Godhead but this view of the statement is based on inference. It is not a statement on the nature

of the Godhead but an outburst from a now undoubting Thomas.’<sup>3</sup>

‘**Passages on which doctrine is based should not be incidental i.e. passages that are non-essential to the main teaching of a book or that do not constitute a teaching statement.**’<sup>4</sup>

### EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT TEXTS

The following are explicit New Testament texts speaking of the relationship of men and women in marriage and in the ecclesia and the teaching role of women in positive and unequivocal language. Quotations are provided from complementarian, egalitarian, and unaligned commentaries, in order to demonstrate that these texts are widely recognized as speaking explicitly about of the relationship of men and women in marriage and in the ecclesia and the teaching role of women, even though commentators may disagree on their interpretation.

- 1 Corinthians 11:3, ‘But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, **and the man is the head of a woman**, and God is the head of Christ.’<sup>5</sup>  
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<sup>3</sup> Byrnes, ‘God Christ Man Woman’, p. 11 (2010).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>5</sup> ‘What does κεφαλή ‘head’ imply? 1. It implies a hierarchical meaning of authority of one over another [AB, Alf, BAGD, Ed, EGT, Gdt, Herm, Ho, ICC, Lns, MNTC, My, NIC, NTC, TG, TNTC, Vn]’, Trail, ‘An Exegetical Summary of 1 Corinthians 10-16’, p. 58 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008); the seventeen references cited shows agreement from a range of standard Bible commentaries and lexicons.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Even if by “head” Paul means “more prominent/preeminent partner” or “one through whom the other exists,” his language

- 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, ‘As in all the churches of the saints, **the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak. Rather, let them be in submission**, as in fact the law says. If they want to find out about something, **they should ask their husbands at home, because it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church.**’<sup>8 9</sup>

- Colossians 3:18, ‘Wives, **submit to your husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord.’<sup>10 11</sup>

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and the flow of the argument seem to reflect an assumed hierarchy through which glory and shame flow upward from those with lower status to those above them (see Thiselton 2000: 812–22; Watson 2000: 43–44n3; Loader 2004: 100).’, Beale & Carson, ‘Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament’, p. 731 (2007).

<sup>7</sup> ‘(Some interpreters have tried to explain away the hierarchical implications of v.3 by arguing that *kephalē* means “source” rather than “ruler.” This is a possible meaning of the word, and it fits nicely with v. 8, in which Paul alludes to the Genesis story that describes the creation of woman out of man; however, in view of the whole shape of the argument, the patriarchal implications of v. 3 are undeniable. Even if Paul is thinking here primarily of man as the source of women rather than authority over woman, this still serves as the warrant for a claim about his ontological preeminence over her, as vv. 7-9 show.)’, Hays (egalitarian), ‘First Corinthians’, Interpretation: a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, p. 184 (1997).

<sup>8</sup> ‘Should be subordinate: TEV replaces RSV’s positive expression by a negative one: “they must not be in charge.” One may also say “they must not hold positions of leadership.”’, Ellingworth, et al, ‘A handbook on Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians’, UBS Handbook Series, p. 326 (1995).

<sup>9</sup> ‘One may or may not agree with Paul’s teaching about the submission of women and his views about Genesis, but it seems to be blatant special pleading to attempt to discredit or to diminish the point of 14:34 by claiming it is unpauline, either in its view toward women or in its method of appropriation of Scriptural themes from the Old Testament.’, Oster (complementarian), ‘1 Corinthians’, College Press NIV Commentary (1995).

<sup>10</sup> ‘The call for wives to be subject (ὑποτάσσομαι, “subject oneself, be subordinate to”) is unequivocal, not even lightened by the prefixed call “Be subject to one another,” or

<sup>1</sup> ‘We consider the methods printed by Dr Thomas and from your own website (see below) to be sound, and we reckon we have followed them.’, ‘Reply 1’, p. 64 (February 7, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> From brother Foreman’s principles of interpretation, printed by brother Thomas in ‘Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come’, pp.179-180 (1859).

- Ephesians 5:22-24, **‘Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife** as also Christ is the head of the church – he himself being the savior of the body. But as the church submits to Christ, **so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**’<sup>12 13 14</sup>

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the addition “as the church is subject to Christ” (as in Eph. 5:21, 24).<sup>16</sup> **The exhortation should not be weakened in translation in deference to modern sensibilities** (cf. again 1 Cor. 14:34; so rightly Martin, Colossians and Philemon 119). **But neither should its significance be exaggerated; “subjection” means “subordination,” not “subjugation”** (Schrage, Ethics 253; so also Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 251–52).’, Dunn, ‘The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A commentary on the Greek text’, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, p. 247 (1996).

<sup>11</sup> **‘Paul believed that there was a hierarchical order in creation, and that in this order the man was the “head” of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3).179’**, Bruce (egalitarian), ‘The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians’, *New International Commentary on the Greek new Testament*, p. 164 (1984).

<sup>12</sup> **‘In translation the verb must be supplied from the participle of “to submit” in the preceding verse.** This verb is used in military contexts of a subordinate’s relationship to his superior in the army hierarchy. **It is used of a wife’s relation to her husband** in Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1; **of servants to masters** in Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:12; **of people to state authorities** in Romans 13:1. **It means “to be subject to, obey, be ruled by.”** It carries **the implication of subordination**, reflecting the standards of the time, **which no amount of special pleading can disguise.** Phps “learn to adapt yourselves” **is an unfortunate attempt to make the command more palatable in a different age.**’, Bratcher & Nida, ‘A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians’, *UBS Handbook Series*, p. 139 (1993).

<sup>13</sup> **‘It should also be noted that the parallel in Col 3:18ff. does not mention mutual submission; it begins with a straightforward imperative command.**’, Boles, ‘Galatians & Ephesians’, *College Press NIV Commentary* (1993)

<sup>14</sup> **‘The exhortation to wives to be subject to their husbands is often understood as a request for voluntary subordination. However, the strength of the analogy with Christ and the church undercuts the “voluntary” quality of the exhortation.’**; Tanzer (egalitarian), ‘Eph 5:22-33 Wives (and Husbands) Exhorted’, in Meyers, Craven, & Kraemer, ‘Women in Scripture:

- 1 Timothy 2:11-12, **‘A woman must learn quietly with all submissiveness.** But I do not allow a woman **to teach or exercise authority over a man. She must remain quiet.**’<sup>15 16 17 18 19</sup>

- Titus 2:4-5, **‘In this way they will train the younger women** to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, fulfilling their duties at home, kind,

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a dictionary of named and unnamed women in the Hebrew Bible, the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books, and the New Testament’, p. 482 (2001).

<sup>15</sup> **‘This perhaps means that the women should submit to the authority of the men as teachers and should accept with humility and obedience what is taught to them.** The logical offshoot of this is that **women should not teach men or have authority over them.**’, Arichea (egalitarian), & Hatton, ‘A handbook on Paul’s letters to Timothy and to Titus’, *UBS Handbook Series*, p. 58 (1995).

<sup>16</sup> **‘Although women were not prohibited from teaching altogether, their relationship with men was clearly to remain a subservient one.’**, Brown (egalitarian), ‘2 Timothy 2:9-15 Women Who Profess Reverence for God’, in Meyers, Craven, & Kraemer, ‘Women in Scripture: a dictionary of named and unnamed women in the Hebrew Bible, the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books, and the New Testament’, p. 489 (2001).

<sup>17</sup> **‘That Paul was influenced by circumstances and framed his words to meet specific situations, however, is not to deny that in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the house rules of Colossians and Ephesians, and, particularly, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, there are statements that assert the subordination of women, exhort women to submission, and command women to be silent in the churches.’**, Longnecker (egalitarian), ‘New Testament social ethics for today’, p. 87 (1984).

<sup>18</sup> **‘In this text women are asked to subordinate themselves to men and not presume to exercise leadership roles over them.’**, Evans, ‘From prophecy to testament: the function of the Old Testament in the New’, p. 233 (2004).

<sup>19</sup> **‘The author of 1 Timothy excluded women from this role in any case.** He says: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (2:12). **On the other hand, the Letter to Titus, probably written by the same author, does give a teaching role to older women.**’, Sullivan, ‘From apostles to bishops: the development of the episcopacy in the early church’, p. 74 (2001).

**being subject to their own husbands**, so that the message of God may not be discredited.’<sup>20 21 22</sup>

- 1 Peter 3:1, **‘In the same way, wives, be subject to your own husbands.** Then, even if some are disobedient to the word, they will be won over without a word by the way you live,’<sup>23 24 25</sup>

(Jonathan Burke, 2010)

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<sup>20</sup> **‘Finally, the instructions invoke the most fundamental element of the household ethic concerning wives: younger wives must “be subject to their husbands.”’**, Towner (egalitarian), ‘The Letters to Timothy and Titus’, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p.728 (2006).

<sup>21</sup> **‘Submissive derives from a verb that includes the elements of recognition of authority (“accept the authority of someone”), subordination, and obedience.** This means that these younger women **should willingly subject themselves to their husbands**, whether they are believers or not. This idea of wives submitting to **husbands is found in other parts of the New Testament** (see, for example, **1 Peter 3:1; Col 3:18; and Eph 5:22).**’, Arichea (egalitarian), & Hatton, ‘A handbook on Paul’s letters to Timothy and to Titus’, *UBS Handbook Series*, p. 284 (1992).

<sup>22</sup> **‘Finally, he urges that they also be subject to their husbands cf. 1 Tim. 2:11; Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:21–23; 1 Pet. 3:1).’**, Fee (egalitarian), ‘New International Biblical commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus’, p. 188 (1988).

<sup>23</sup> **‘Wives are to express their submission “to every human creature” by their submission to their own husbands.’**, Davids (egalitarian), ‘The First Epistle of Peter’, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 115 (1990).

<sup>24</sup> **‘The sense of the verse then would be that since Christians are expected to “be submissive,” it is likewise expected that wives should submit to their husbands.’**, Arichea (egalitarian), & Nida, ‘A Handbook on the first letter from Peter’, *UBS Handbook Series*, p. 88 (1994).

<sup>25</sup> **““In the same way” probably refers back to 2:13 and 18. As all Christians should submit to the governing authorities (2:13) and slaves should submit to their masters (2:18), “in the same way” wives should submit to their husbands.’**, Black & Black, ‘1 & 2 Peter’, *The College Press NIV Commentary* (1998).