

The Godly Husband

The Godly Family

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Let's read again in Ephesians 5:25.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Children, when your parents or teachers praise you, they are giving you what we call a compliment and that word is spelt with an "I" in the middle, c-o-m-p-l-i-m-e-n-t. A compliment. But I want to talk to you today about another kind of compliment, this time with an "e" in the middle, c-o-m-p-l-e-m-e-n-t. When we say two things complement one another, we're saying that there are two things that are very different to look at and yet when they are brought together, they work really really well together, much better than they do apart.

Maybe you can think of something like a nut and a bolt. I'm sure if you go into your garage, you'll find maybe nuts and bolts around you. You look at these two things, you look at the nut, you look at the bolt, and they're very different and really apart, they're pretty useless on their own. But when put together, they function really well. They work. They accomplish a lot together that they cannot do apart. Two very different things and yet which work really well together. They complement one another. They don't compete with one another, they complete one another. And when you think of that, you might also think of the one who designed this and you might be full of praise for the person that designed this whole mechanism of a nut and bolt.

Maybe another illustration of this is a choir. You can have people all singing a song, say from the Psalter, and they're all singing the same note and it sounds good, but then a conductor comes along and one of these people continue to sing the melody, and then he gives out another part, maybe a tenor, and to another, bass, and so on, maybe eventually there are four different parts and they all sound different and if you're to hear them just on their own, it might sound a bit strange in some cases, but when they're all put together in a harmony, when all four different tunes come together, the end result is far nicer, isn't it, than just hearing four people singing the same note. They complement one another. They don't compete, they complete one another. And you might, when you hear this, you might

be full of praise for the composer or the conductor who have managed to put all this together so perfectly and beautifully.

Keep these images, these illustrations in mind as you think of marriage which is what we want to think of today. You look at man and a woman and they're very different but God in marriage brings them together in such a way that these two very different kinds of human being complement one another. They work together really really well. They don't compete with one another, they complete one another. And when you see this working well as described here in Ephesians 5, you cannot but be full of praise and worship for the God who has designed this and who has put it all together so wisely and so wonderfully. God made two different genders but he made them complementary with different roles and responsibilities and yet which when put together forms a really good team.

Now, it might be that some in our congregation are maybe already switching off. You've maybe seen the title "The Godly Husband" and you think, "Well, I'm not a man so this has nothing to do with me." Or maybe some of the younger men think, "Well, I'm not married." Or maybe there are widowers here and they think, "Well, marriage is in the past for me." Or maybe some of the women might think, "Well, this can't be for me." But I want to try and persuade you that this is for everyone here. Of course it's for those who are married, especially men today. Next week, we want to look at the godly wife, God willing.

But if you think of it, the unmarried men here should pay particular attention to this so that you know the kind of man you should be aiming to be in order to make your marriage a success. And I think some of the young men here might be quite stunned at the way the Bible describes the ideal husband very differently to the kinds of standards and norms that the world thinks make a real man.

Also for wives, though, when you are thinking about your husband, how are you thinking about him? This chapter gives you categories with which to view your husband and help you complement him better. If you are taking on his roles and responsibilities, this isn't going to work so well and so you too have a reason to listen in order to ensure that you're not, as it were, treading on his toes and trespassing in his God-given territory.

And even unmarried women here who have hope of marriage, this chapter describes the kind of man you should be looking for. Again, we'll see it's quite different to what the world says is the ideal husband.

But also this is important for the whole church because it's through families primarily that God builds his church. Yes, at times God does thankfully take people out of a totally non-Christian background and wonderfully save them, but God generally works through families. People raised in Christian homes, seeing Christian patterns of conduct and morality, that's what God blesses, Gospel-centered homes, and therefore our whole church has an interest in making sure all our homes are like this.

Also, this is a picture of how, as we'll see, Christ loves the church. It's not just about how a husband loves a woman but it's how Christ loves his people and therefore, again, this should help all of us better understand the love of God in Christ.

And maybe it's especially important that we all pay attention because we're living in a day when this model of godly manhood is under such sustained attack. The kinds of models, kinds of male roles and responsibilities that are being promoted are very contrary to this and it's destroying many marriages. It's taking a dreadful toll on many men and women and families and our culture really is collapsing because this foundation is being so attacked and undermined. So in a day of great denial of these roles and responsibilities, great confusion about them, we are all really required to pay careful and close attention so that we don't get swept along with our culture and so that we can be a means of rebuilding our culture and our communities.

So as we've said, we want to look today at the godly husband. This is based largely on the seventh commandment. I'll refer to that in the Heidelberg Catechism briefly. The Heidelberg Catechism and the Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Standards, their treatment of the seventh commandment is largely stated negatively, as we'll see, but the negative in the commandment implies the positive as well, and it's the positive especially that we want to hear today from this passage. And it's really very simple, just going to give you two points: of what is a godly husband, how does he relate to his wife. These two things: number one, he leads her; and number two, he loves her. He leads her and he loves her.

Let's look at these in turn. First of all, he leads her. As we look at this chapter, there's one word that stands out and it's the word in verse 23: the husband is the head of the wife. The husband is the head of the wife and the wife's responsibilities, as we'll see next week, are partly to submit to that headship.

Now, we've got to be very careful when we use this language. First of all, we have to be very careful to state categorically that when it comes to salvation, there is no headship. When it comes to salvation, men and women are totally on the same plane, equally justified, equally forgiven, equally adopted, equally loved. As Paul puts at the end of Galatians 3 when he's speaking of salvation, he's saying in Christ Jesus there is no male or female. We want to state that categorically. It's not as if men rank higher than women when it comes to this whole area of salvation. In God's eyes, men and women are equally loved, justified, saved.

But also in general, men do not rank higher than women. We mustn't come to this word of headship with ideas of superiority and inferiority. There are weaknesses on both sides. 1 Peter speaks of the woman being the weaker vessels and then that context is of physical weakness and that's generally true, isn't it? Of course there are exceptions to this, but generally women have weaker physical frames, although interestingly, they live four to five years longer than men. So in that respect, they're not weaker.

And I'm sure any one of us who have been around our wives for any period of time or have known our mothers well, we can clearly see that in some areas women are stronger than men and better at things than men. This is all about complementarianism, it's all about how these two genders complement one another and you don't get complementing when the strengths are all on one side and the weaknesses are all on the other. No.

So this is not about a difference in salvation, it's not about superiority and inferiority, it's not about all weakness on one side and all strengths on the other, but when it comes to day-to-day living, there has to be a leader. We know that from everyday life. You look at a sports team, there has to be a captain or a manager. You look at a business or an institution, there has to be a manager, an administrator, a chief executive, as it were. And also when it comes to this partnership, this relationship of a man to a woman, there has to be a head in a home and God has chosen that that head be the man.

It's stated very clearly here, the husband is the head of the wife. Now, you might remember from our 1 Timothy series that that headship was not arbitrary, it wasn't just, "Oh, I'll make the man the head," without any reason. No. This headship was based upon creation, the order of creation, and also the disaster that ensued at the fall when this headship was set aside. So it's not arbitrary, it's wisely chosen. Some of the reasons we know, some we probably don't as yet.

So what does this mean? Well, he is the head does not mean he is the ruler. That's very difficult for us. When we think of headship, probably our experience in this life is poured into that word and so we might think of maybe a very domineering authoritative, maybe even abusive father and you think, "That's what headship means?" Or we might think of a really bad boss that we've had and think, "That's what headship means? That's what leadership means?" Or we might think of a sports team we were on and the captain or the manager was a real loudmouth, a real aggressive person and we think, "Oh, that's what leadership means?" No. That's what ruling means, that's not what headship means. They're different.

It doesn't say the husband is the ruler of the wife, it says he is the head. Now, just think of that metaphor, the husband is the head of the wife. This is therefore not a threat to the wife but a safety mechanism and what makes it a safety mechanism is the head is connected to the body. This is really what Paul is saying throughout this chapter. He keeps connecting the body and the head, the wife and the husband.

You think of a ruler, he's not connected. There's not vital relationship here. But the head is united. The head is connected to the body and therefore is consumed with the care and the protection and the keeping of the body. You even think of the dictionary definitions of these two words. Rule is to control; to direct; to exercise dominating power, authority or influence over: to decide or declare judicially. You get the flavor of that, that ruling. But to lead as the head is different. The dictionary definition of lead is: to go before or with; to show the way; to conduct or escort. You see, that's very different, isn't it, to rule? A lot of men read this chapter, read this verse and say, "I'm the ruler. I'm the authority in this home." No, that's not the metaphor. It's of headship. Think about your head and its

relationship to your body. It's not about rule, is it? It's about leadership and that will become clear as we go on.

Secondly, he is, under this topic of leading her, he's the head, secondly, he is a servant. What? How can you be a leader and a servant? Well, that's exactly the kind of leadership that God puts before us in the Bible. This is not about somebody sitting there barking orders to subordinates. No, this is first and foremost a servant whose aim is the good of the one served.

He's a servant. Christ exalted service above rule. He kept on emphasizing that to his disciples, didn't he? You take John 13, for an example, where Jesus redefines the emblems of leadership. He sets aside, as it were, the throne and the scepter and he takes a towel and a basin. He doesn't bark orders, he washes feet. This is what he says at the end of it, "You call me Master and Lord and you say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done." He's totally redefining what it means to lead and he's saying in this context, to lead is to serve. It's not about, "How can I get her to serve me?" It's, "How can I serve her better? How can I use my headship to care for my body better?" Mary Kassian who has written much on this subject said this, "Authority is not the right to rule, it's the responsibility to serve."

He is the head. He is a servant. Thirdly, he is a listener. I'm sure we've all had bosses and, "Well, he just never listens. She never listens to us. She just keeps on saying this is the way, this is the way, and there's no point in even trying to speak." Again, this is not what's envisaged here. This kind of leadership is a listening leadership. The man listens to his wife. He listens to her fears, to her anxieties, to her cares, her concerns. He listens to her advice and her counsel and he asks for it. The man should view his wife as his chief counselor, his chief adviser, his chief resource of wisdom and input outside of God and his word.

This kind of leadership listens. It's like the head, isn't it, again? It listens to the body. It feels a pain in its little finger and it hears it, it senses it and it responds to it. Your stomach feels empty and hungry and the head thinks, "How can I provide and fill?" The true leader in this context is a really good listener. He doesn't take decisions on his own but he consults with his wife and seeks her input and encourages her to speak and to be really honest and open.

He listens but, fourthly, he decides. Yes, he is to serve her and he is to listen to her, but ultimately he's to take decisions. He takes her counsel, he takes full account of her views and her needs, he weighs them seriously and carefully but then he doesn't say, "Well, do what you think is best." No, he takes responsibility. The buck stops with him. He has to step up and having taken everything into account, take responsibility. He's not to be just a passivist who just gives everything over but, no, he is to ultimately take the big decisions temporally and also spiritually.

Fifthly, he is a manager. This is related to the last point. Yes, he's the decider but he doesn't do everything. Having taken decisions, he delegates. He knows where his weaknesses are and where his wife's strengths are and he doesn't try to do everything. He looks at his wife and he sees, "Well, she's good at this and good at that, and this is a role and a responsibility that God has given her." And he hands over and he does so in a way that will bring out the best in her. He doesn't give her all the horrible jobs, he doesn't just ask her to do the things he doesn't want to do. No, he gives her the tasks that he knows will cause her to bloom and flourish and grow and mature in many different ways. He sees his wife has been designed as a helper to him and he helps her to help and he encourages her to help.

J. Adams says this, "A good manager will look at his helper and see she has certain abilities. If I'm going to manage my household well, I must see that every last one of those gifts is developed and put to use as fully as possible. He will not want to quash her personality, rather he will seek to bring it to the fullest flower." It's beautifully put, isn't it?

Lead her. Men, you are her head. You are her servant. You are a listener. You are a decider. And you are a manager. That's what this headship involves and it's all modeled on this: as Christ is the head of the church and he is the Savior of the body. You look at Christ's headship over his disciples and make that your model. But moving on, secondly, the duty is to love her. Lead her and love her. Men really fall often in two sides, two extremes. The one is to be very passive and non-involved, "As long as I give her the check every week or two, then that's me done." Walks away from all responsibilities. On the other hand, you've got the controller, the dictator, the micromanager, the domineering and, therefore, when we have heard "lead her," we also need to hear "love her."

"Lead her" addresses really the pacifist and "love her" really addresses the aggressive controller, the crusher. That's why three times in this chapter, three times in these verses, man is told, "love your wives." Notice it comes straight after, verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives." So it's husbands, you're the head of your wife, lead her; husbands, love your wives. Beautifully balanced.

Sometimes men will say, "Well, my wife, she just doesn't respect my leadership." In most cases as far as I can see, it's because she doesn't sense your love. Most leadership problems are love problems and we're told two ways in which men are to love their wives. Firstly, they are to love them as their own bodies, verse 28, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." And secondly, we're to love as Christ loved the church, verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." Let's look at these two metaphors, two examples of love.

To love as our own bodies. It's interesting that the apostle uses two of the most tender Greek words there are in the whole Greek language. Verse 29, "no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." "Nourish" is the word for "provide." It's a kind of feeding word. Pour into her life; feed her. Provide for her in every way: physically, intellectually, emotionally, relationally, socially,

recreationally, spiritually. So many dimensions here to nourish, so many aspects of femininity which the man here is called to nourish, to feed, to fertilize, to encourage, to see growth in. Men, consider that. In these areas, in what ways are you nourishing your wife physically? Intellectually? Emotionally? Recreationally? Spiritually? Socially? That's a big checklist, isn't it? Maybe take one a week. Say, "What way can I better nourish her recreationally or socially in encouraging friendships with others?" And so on.

Nourish her and then this word "cherish," and it's literally "keep warm," and it's taken from the metaphor of the bird putting its wings over its young to keep them warm and ultimately safe. There is protection and shielding here. Protecting from herself, maybe. If you have a wife that is so energetic and enthusiastic and always wanting to have perfect standards and sometimes the man has to stand up and say, "You don't need to do this. It's running you into the ground. It's damaging you." Protect her from herself, protect her from others as well as that bird putting his hands, his wings over.

And just keep in mind, men, how do you care for your own bodies? What happens when you get a little nick in your finger? Well, it's like you've been stabbed to death, isn't it? You run for first aid. You run for help. You get the plaster. You get the antiseptic. And you probably mention it 10 times a day for the next week. We care for our bodies, don't we? We are protective of our bodies. We don't like anything affecting them. We can't stand even the slightest pain. That kind of care. That kind of love. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." Think about that. How do I love my body? In what way do I care and nourish and cherish my body? In exactly the same way, go and do the same for your wife.

But then, secondly, even more demanding, it's a high demand to love someone as much as we love our own bodies but here's something even higher, harder, to love as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. How do we do this? Well, this kind of love is a first love. How did Christ love the church? He loved the church more than anything else in this world. Men, that's the kind of love you're to have for your wives. Apart from God, there is no one in this world who has first place but your wife. That friendship, that relationship is the most important in all the world. Nothing displaces her ever. She is number one. This is prioritized love.

Secondly, it's incomparable love. Did Christ look at his church and say, "Well, you know, some others really I would have preferred"? No, never. In the Heidelberg Catechism when it speaks of what does the seventh commandment require of us, it says that we must live chastely and temperately whether in holy wedlock or in single life. It forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto. And that all starts with comparing, by looking at your wife and then looking at someone else and seeing something better in them. No. This is to be an incomparable or a non-comparable love. Beware the first beginnings of that thought, "I wish she was my wife." Dangerous, dangerous times.

This also is to be a practical love. How did Christ love the church? He gave himself for it. He did things, didn't he? What does that mean for us? It means helping with cooking,

with cleaning, with shopping, with children. No, it's not enough just to go and do your 9 to 5 and dump the check on the table. No. "What can I do to help you with the children? With the finances? Is there anything in the house that needs done? Can I run an errand for you?" This is a practical, helpful love.

Also, this is an appreciative love. Jesus told the church and his disciples how much he loved them. He expressed it to them verbally. Likewise, so should husbands express appreciation for their wives. Tell them frequently you love them and praise them.

Then, fifthly, this love is to be gracious. You're going to see things in her that you don't like. She's a sinner just as you are and yet you're to overlook it. You're to love her as the Lord loves you. And when she does sin and she does confess, you're to freely forgive. Gracious love.

And again, this love is to be sacrificial. That's really one of the great emphases here. He gave himself for it. He gave himself for it. Here's a quote from Tim Keller on this, "The Bible does not offer a choice between fulfillment and sacrifice but rather mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice." Mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice. He went on, "You only discover your own happiness after each of you has put the happiness of your spouse ahead of your own." It seems illogical, doesn't it? "How do I make myself happier? How can I make her make me happier?" No, "How can I make her happier?" is the first question and in doing so, there will be a mutual growth in happiness.

This also is a sanctifying love. It aims at the holiness of the wife. You notice here in this chapter he wants to present, verse 26, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This doesn't mean, men, you start nitpicking, "Ah, you're wrong here. You're wrong here. You really need to work in this area of sanctification. You've really got to improve there." No. Again, let me quote Keller here, "Within this Christian vision for marriage, here's what it means to fall in love: it's to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating and to see, 'I see who God is making you and it excites me. I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and see I always knew you could be like this. I get glimpses of it on earth but now, look at you!'" Keep that vision in mind and you're sanctifying love will be sanctifying.

This also is a confessing love. You're going to make mistakes, men. You're going to blunder. You're never going to do all this and, therefore, at times we need to go to her and say, "I'm sorry. I'm not the husband I'm meant to be. I've not led you properly here. I've not loved you as well as I ought here. Please forgive me and let's go to God's throne and seek his forgiveness above all and his cleansing." And he's willing to give it. We must bring all our shortcomings to him, lay them there and say, "Wash them away. Give me a fresh start." Even today. If you're sitting here today, men, and you're feeling convicted and the thing to do is not start these things, no, start with confession. Start with the

Gospel. Start with a clean sheet. That alone can empower you. Not guilt but gratitude for the guilt being washed away.

Lastly, this love is a model love as this whole passage really is saying. In effect, somebody should be able to come into our homes and watch our relationship with our wives and say this, "I understand the Gospel." They should be able to look at how we complement one another, how we work together, how we lead and how we love her, and say, "I now get it. I now understand how Christ loves his church and how he gave himself for her." That's the great challenge, isn't it?

Men, this is what you've to focus on. Sometimes when we come to this chapter, the wives are listening for the husbands and the husbands are listening for the wives. Husbands, listen for yourselves. Just you take care of this part and most often the wife part will follow. Your responsibility is this focus and if you're leading and loving like this, most Christian women will respond so enthusiastically and appreciatively because God has made us like this. If we fulfill that role, she will come in and just so perfectly fit in and complement and each will grow and flourish.

Young men, I just want to close with a word to you. This is nothing like you, is it? You think you're going to get your woman via big muscles, via sporting prowess, via fashionable clothes, via showing off and attention seeking, through flashy cars and rugged trucks, through hunting trophies. That's what you think. I don't blame you because that's what the world has told you to think. These are the patterns that you're seeing and hearing continually and true Christian women are utterly repulsed. They're not looking for your muscles or your music or your trophies, your machoness, they're looking for these two things, "Will he lead me and will he love me?" And they can tell. They can tell and there is no substitute for it. Nothing. And if they see that in you, they will be irresistibly attracted to you because God has made it to work that way.

Let's pray.